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SERMONS

ON

FAITH AND DOCTRINE

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ON

FAITH AND DOCTRINE

BY THE LATE

BENJAMIN JOWETT, M.A.

MASTER OF BALLIOL COLLEGE

EDITED BY THE VERY REV. THE HON.

W. H. FREMANTLE, D.D.

DEAN OF RIPON

TRANSYLVANIA BIBLE SCHOOL
Youth's Opportunity
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PREFACE

THE most notable fact as to Jowett's doctrinal position is that he lays very little stress on the Church system, either the system of worship or that of dogma. From this it has been concluded that he held lightly by Christianity itself and was content with a vague theism, in which Plato counted for as much as Christ Himself.

The readers of these Sermons will hardly think that his theism was vague. Metaphysically, they will find that he shrank neither from the assertion of the divine personality, though conscious of the limitations attendant upon the transfer of that expression from man to God, nor from speaking of Christ as 'our Saviour,' and as the expression of the divine nature in a human form; and that God and immortality were all in all to him. Morally, they will find that the image of Christ is dominant in the preacher's thoughts.

It may be admitted that he was naturally of a

sceptical turn of mind. But he combated this tendency in all practical matters. No one was more decided than he in all that concerned moral character or educational discipline; and, though he would criticize a proposal which aimed at some good object, yet, when convinced, he would support it steadily. 'I think enthusiasm so much more valuable a quality than criticism,' he would say. But there were several causes which increased his natural tendency to shrink from sharp definitions on matters of deep importance. His love of truth was fastidious, and an over-statement of the side of a case with which he sympathized was positively painful to him. He was also habitually reticent. His early evangelical associations, and the Tractarian controversy in his youth at Oxford, had resulted in a strong sense of the evils of much talk about religion. He regretted at the close of his life that religion should be put aside in conversation; but, only occasionally, and with intimate friends, would he speak of it at all freely. I remember, when I was his pupil, his closing a discussion in which I had tried to engage him, by saying, 'We are tired in Oxford of talk about such things.' To an undergraduate, at a much later time, who had undergone a very sudden conversion, and told him that he had 'found Jesus,' he said, laying his hand on his shoulder, 'I am very glad of it, my dear boy, but don't talk about it.' To this fear of exaggeration was added in his early manhood a conviction that the statements in which theological opinion

was commonly expressed were inadequate. I recall a saying of his in the beginning of 1853, that, if we could make a tour of the world, getting to understand the faith of each country, our religious beliefs would probably be very different from what they are. I do not think this implied any essential scepticism, but merely the doubt whether Christian freedom of thought had as yet been allowed its full scope: and this feeling will be found in many of the sermons in this volume.

His attitude was well indicated in a few words which I heard from him in 1857, when I was reading theology in Oxford: 'The criticisms of the present day will at first be felt as a blow to faith, but they will issue in its fuller establishment; all that is important will survive.' The method of exposition followed in his book on St. Paul's Epistles (published in 1855) also throws light on it. He was never satisfied with such an interpretation as would commit the Apostle to an exact logical system, but sought to bring out the 'streams of tendency' which combined in each phrase, and to make it point to a truth larger than any which our theological systems have expressed. The reception, however, which was given to this work, the misrepresentation of it as an attack upon Christian truth, and the personal injustice of which he was the object, made him shrink into himself. He published a second edition, in which the Essays were rehandled, the doctrinal utterances of the first edition were explained, and a positive statement was

substituted for a negative one: for instance, in the Essay on the Atonement, where the first edition had 'not the sacrifice, not the satisfaction, but the greatest moral act ever done in the world,' the second edition explains how the moral act is the true sacrifice and satisfaction. But these explanations were not accepted by those who had prejudged the case. He published his treatise on the Interpretation of Scripture in the 'Essays and Reviews' in 1860, and had it in contemplation as late as 1870 to contribute to a second series of essays on the same lines; but, partly, the new duties and responsibilities of the Mastership, partly, the growing doubt whether the time was come for the profitable discussion of such subjects in England, made him feel it undesirable to proceed. In his illness in 1891, when he thought of asking me to be co-editor with Professor Campbell of a new issue of his work on St. Paul's Epistles (a task which he afterwards felt it better to entrust to Professor Campbell alone), he said to me: 'The chief interest of the book and the essays contained in it is that they came a little before their time.' Some of his friends urged him, when the termination of his tenure of the Vice-Chancellorship at Oxford in 1886 left him with somewhat more leisure, to undertake some definite theological work. But, though not absolutely declining, he said that he doubted whether he could then write such a work as would live. His energy, which was then exhausted by four years of incessant official

work, revived to some extent, but not sufficiently for the effort required.

Had Jowett's early work been received with candour, instead of being treated as an attack upon Christianity, he would in all probability have been a great religious teacher. The positive side of his convictions would have gained strength through sympathy, and he would have put forward his conclusions as the development and extension of received truth, not as a criticism upon its previous expression; for he, no less than others, varied in his tone about such subjects according to his environment. I remember his saying, when I had been appointed Bampton Lecturer, and he was wishing me to come to Balliol as theological tutor: 'I think we have been too much afraid of system.' Some casual remarks may, no doubt, be found in his biography which may seem to show a distrust of the records of the life of Christ; but, on the other hand, all through his later years the work which he most longed to write, had health and strength sufficed, was a life of Christ. What he opposed was the dwelling upon each statement in the record as if all alike were unimpeachable, upon each word casually uttered as equal to the most solemn statements of moral and religious truth. But the character and spirit of Christ, which the record alone discloses, were to him supreme. "The perfect man," he says, "the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only image we are capable of attaining of the perfect God."

A few of his sayings may perhaps be introduced here in corroboration of this general statement. 'We are not,' he is constantly saying, 'to be the slaves of words; the reality beneath them is alone important.' "We cannot really understand religious propositions if we are unable to re-word them." His dislike of dogmatic statements was due to his feeling that there is something untruthful in closing over a complex subject by a general and inadequate affirmation. "The nature of God is inscrutable, and can no more be expressed in words and figures of speech than in the graven images of olden times." On the other hand, he constantly points to the firm standing-ground for religion which is presented by nature and morality. "Physical laws are a revelation of God. By knowing and using them we become safe from the arrow that flieth by day and the pestilence which walketh in darkness." "The curtain of the physical world is closing in upon us. What does this mean but that the arms of His intelligence are embracing us on every side?" As regards moral truth he is still more emphatic. "If a man were to worship truth, justice, and love, would he not be really worshipping God?" "We may say of God that He is infinite, incorporeal, and the like. But to say all this of Him is not half so much as to say that He is just, loving, and true." Sayings of this kind, which abound in these sermons, when taken on their negative side, have made some men (rather recklessly, I think) speak of him as

a 'disintegrator.' They are really the attempt to disclose the unassailable basis of faith. As our Lord said that on love to God and man hung all the law and the prophets, so he would say: The great moral ideas implanted within our hearts are the foundation; all that we assert in theology must be consistent with these; on these we fall back when traditional ideas have become untenable. And, as he further contends, these moral principles are fruitful: they enable us to harmonize and develop the new revelations of Himself which God is giving to this generation through science or criticism or the knowledge of other religions. Also, he maintains that this teaching is as positive and authoritative as that which is more commonly acknowledged, and which only appears more certain because it is accepted without inquiry.

There are signs that men's convictions are moving in the direction towards which Jowett pointed. It is possible that he may still be treated among theologians as Thomas Young, the discoverer of the Undulatory Theory of Light, was treated among physicists; of whom the great German, Helmholtz, writes: 'He was one of the most profound minds that the world has ever seen; but he had the misfortune to be too much in advance of his age. . . . His most important ideas, therefore, lay buried and forgotten . . . until a new generation gradually and painfully made the same discoveries, and proved the exactness of his assertions.' But we may hope that the

recognition of Jowett's services in the grander sphere of theology may not be thus delayed.

This short appreciation of Jowett's theological position will, I believe, be felt to be borne out by the sermons in this volume. They will be found, no doubt, to be unsystematic (this is inherent in their form), and so far incomplete. But it may be well to bear in mind that the greatest teachers of the world, whether we take the Central Figure of all, or whether we take Buddha or Socrates in the East and West, left no writings: their ideas, which have moved the heart of mankind, must be gathered from the reports of their disciples. What was felt by Jowett's pupils and friends was an influence of a similar kind, not the binding force of a system, but great thoughts opening out an *aperçu* of things not commonly realized, or a special light which coloured the whole scene. It is not, therefore, as chapters of a work, of which each part has been thought out and made to fit in to the whole, that these sermons should be read; the estimate formed of them will be various, and those who most appreciate them will value, some one part, some another. He himself had no very high opinion of them, and, but for the strong wish of his friends[1], would not have desired their publication. On the other hand, some of the reasons which made him shrink from publicity have passed

[1] See their letter, contained in vol. i.

away; and men are often more ready to learn from the dead[1].

It may not, therefore, be out of place if an attempt be made, however briefly, to give an outline of the contents of these sermons. I have placed first a sermon on Evolution, not only as showing the writer's mode of dealing with the most remarkable philosophical conception which had appeared during his lifetime, or as evincing his perfect independence of thought, but because it meets directly the question raised by that conception as to the central truth of theology, the being of God. The teaching is that the chief source of the knowledge of God is not in the region affected by physical causes, but in the higher nature of man. Next comes a series of sermons which Jowett appears to have intended to place together as giving his teaching on Natural Religion; but two sermons to which he alludes, on the ideas of God conveyed by the Oriental religions and the Greek philosophers, are not among those which have come under my hand, and if they were ever preached they have disappeared. I have therefore thought it best to insert here two sermons which touch upon these subjects in a more general way. The sermon on the 'other sheep not of this fold,' and that on the growth of the true

[1] Should any one desire a fuller and more systematic presentation of Jowett's teaching, I would refer him to an article by Mr. C. G. Montefiore in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for January, 1900.

idea of the divine character, indicate Jowett's method of treating non-Christian faiths. The sermons on Hebrew religion and on the Christian idea of God embrace the field of what is commonly called Revealed Religion; while that on 'the Subjection of the Son' (1 Cor. xv. 28) is an attempt to exhibit the modern aspects of religion, in which the biblical ideas are modified and enlarged by the experience and discoveries of later times.

The sermon on 'Feeling after God' describes the universal elements of religion and their influence on the life of mankind. The idea that God can ever disappear from men's minds he declares to be chimerical. The contemplation of the ideal of truth and justice is in itself a kind of worship of God; the pursuit of goodness is an incipient Christianity. 'In Him,' says the text of another similar sermon, which it has been found impossible to include, 'we live, and move, and have our being.' We commune with God through nature, and worship Him by obeying its laws; and in history by honouring each type of goodness. God is within us as well as without us, we are His offspring and have affinity with Him.

To these sermons, which Jowett himself seems to have selected as typical, are added others in which these general views are expanded or are looked at from various sides: that on the 'Image of the invisible God,' the reflexion of the Divine in nature, in the moral law, in the sense of spiritual things which

belong to our higher life, and in the communion of saints; that on 'God just, loving, true,' in which, by means of three parables, His justice, truth and love are indicated in contrast with certain systems of theology; and in which there is a remarkable passage on the subject of eternal punishment; and that on God as a Spirit—'Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall men worship the Father'—('one of the revolutionary sayings of Christ'), drawing out the spirituality of the true religion, which is not dependent on system. Jowett's biography shows how earnestly in his later years he dwelt upon the belief that the main elements of religion were not only consonant with, but necessary parts of, human nature, and that the fact that they have been revealed or disclosed in the Scriptures should not result in a dependence on the letter of Scripture, or on systems drawn from it, but should stimulate us to find them as they have been enshrined, by the purpose of God, in the very structure of the universe, in the life of humanity, and in our own better mind. But it would be a mistake to suppose that this attitude implied any lack of confidence in the divine character of Christ and His religion. The sermons which follow, on the oneness of Christ with God, through complete community of nature and allegiance; on the authority of Christ, as flowing from His spiritual nature and His union with God; the sermon on 'My Kingdom is not of this world,' which exhibits the spirit of Christ and the

life flowing from it as always above the course of the world, though not necessarily disjoined from it; those on the Lord's Prayer and on prayer generally; and that on the Lord's Supper, show how heartily he responded to the claims which the nature and character of our Lord make upon the conscience.

The concluding sermon is on Immortality, arguing from God's nature and His justice to His children, from the hopes which He has excited in us, from the assurance which we feel that what is best is most enduring, that we shall live to Him beyond the grave, and giving a new and striking view of the saying, 'If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.' I have added, since space permits it, a sermon on Friendship. It is unconnected with the rest, but its publication has been asked for by several of those who heard it, and who lamented its exclusion from a former volume.

It will be felt, no doubt, by many who crave for a complete theological system, that these sermons are but fragmentary, and, so far, unsatisfying. But it should be remembered that the teachings of some of the greatest of men have not been given in detailed statements, but rather, to use a phrase of Matthew Arnold's, 'as language thrown out at an object of consciousness not fully grasped.' Another thing which will be observed in these sermons is the constant recurrence to a few great ideas. This also is a characteristic of the greatest religious teachers, especially in old age.

Richard Baxter, whom Jowett greatly admired, says that a single expression from the Lord's Prayer or the Decalogue gave him more spiritual sustenance than all the intricate theories for which he had once contended. We may admit that Jowett's mind was strongly influenced by Plato, and that the 'contemplation of the idea of good' was the medium through which religion most powerfully influenced him. But the 'idea of good' was what theologians have always dwelt on as 'the image of Christ,' not as a model or literal exemplar, but as a spirit capable of renewing the world.

His presentation of this may not embrace the whole of religion; it certainly will not answer all the questions which men may ask. If it is felt by some of us that Jowett's philosophic mind was too readily satisfied with the idea, and gave too little weight to the outward form, whether of the Incarnation or of the Church; yet we may recall to mind that St. John, who applies to the teachers of his day this test, 'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God,' also records the words in which Christ bids His followers rejoice that this outward form should pass from their view, and the Spirit, the Comforter, should come. To many minds this is the truth which is specially needed. To those who feel that the systems in which religion has clothed itself have become to them, in a certain degree, inadequate or unreal, Jowett's teaching will bring strong con-

solation. They will find in it a constant effort to restore the moral and spiritual basis of religion, not conflicting with the ancient standards, but rather tending to interpret them and make them minister more fully to the needs of our day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SERMON		PAGE
I.	*Ps.* viii. 3–8. DARWINISM AND FAITH IN GOD (In 1871)	1
II.	*John* x. 16. GREEK AND ORIENTAL RELIGIONS (Balliol, *Nov.* 1877)	23
III.	*Rom.* iii. 6. GROWTH OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (Before the University)	38
IV.	*Deut.* vi. 4. HEBREW CONCEPTION OF GOD (Balliol, *April* 23, 1876)	57
V.	*Heb.* i. 1, 2. CHRIST'S REVELATION OF GOD (Balliol, *May* 21, 1876)	77
VI.	1 *Cor.* xv. 28. THE SUBJECTION OF THE SON (Undated)	95
VII.	*Acts* xviii. 27. FEELING AFTER GOD (Balliol, *Feb.* 18, 1877)	113
VIII.	*Col.* i. 15. THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD (St. Mary's, Oxford, *Oct.* 25, 1874)	131
IX.	1 *John* iii. 8. GOD JUST, LOVING, TRUE (Balliol, *April* 20, 1884)	153

SERMON		PAGE
X.	*John* iv. 21. SPIRITUAL RELIGION NOT DEPENDENT ON SYSTEM (Balliol. Undated)	174
XI.	*John* vii. 16–18. CHRIST'S UNITY WITH THE FATHER (St. Mary's, Oxford, *Oct.* 22, 1882)	194
XII.	*Matt.* vii. 29. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY (Balliol, *April* 12, 1880)	216
XIII.	*John* xviii. 36. THE UNWORLDLY KINGDOM (Balliol, *Jan.* 22, 1882)	230
XIV.	*Luke* xi. 1, 2. THE LORD'S PRAYER . (Balliol, 1872)	250
XV.	*Luke* xi. 1. PRAYER AND LIFE . (Balliol, *May* 18, 1884)	264
XVI.	*Gen.* i. 2. *Is.* lxi. 1. THE PROPHETIC SPIRIT (Westminster Abbey, *July* 2, 1876)	282
XVII.	*John* vi. 52 and 63. THE LORD'S SUPPER . . (Balliol, 1869)	301
XVIII.	1 *John* iii. 2. IMMORTALITY . . . (Balliol, 1869)	317
	Proverbs xxvii. 17. FRIENDSHIP . . . (Balliol, 1873)	337

SERMONS
ON FAITH AND DOCTRINE

I

DARWINISM, AND FAITH IN GOD[1].

WHEN I CONSIDER THY HEAVENS, THE WORK OF THY FINGERS, THE MOON AND THE STARS, WHICH THOU HAST ORDAINED; WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM? AND THE SON OF MAN, THAT THOU VISITEST HIM? FOR THOU HAST MADE HIM A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS, AND HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOUR. THOU MADEST HIM TO HAVE DOMINION OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; THOU HAST PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET: ALL SHEEP AND OXEN, YEA, AND THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD; THE FOWL OF THE AIR, AND THE FISH OF THE SEA, AND WHATSOEVER PASSETH THROUGH THE PATHS OF THE SEAS. O LORD OUR LORD, HOW EXCELLENT IS THY NAME IN ALL THE EARTH!

PSALM viii. 3–9.

THE sight of nature affects men differently in different ages and countries. We ourselves receive different impressions from natural scenes when the sun shines upon them and when they are enveloped

[1] Preached in 1871.

in mist and storm; and our perceptions of them also vary with the varying moods of our own minds. In the dark December mornings we can hardly remember the delighted feeling with which we welcomed the dawn in spring amid the singing of innumerable birds. In the Hebrew prophets or psalmists likewise may be traced a double feeling about the external world; there is the consciousness of active power in nature, and also of repose, the sense of rest as well as of motion. It is the 'glorious God who makes the thunder,' and at whose presence the animals cower and tremble, who 'bows the heavens and comes down, and there is darkness under His feet'; and then again appears in brightness and light, as in the eighteenth and twenty-ninth Psalms. Yet there is also another tone heard in the language of the Psalmist: 'The hills stand about Jerusalem; even so standeth the Lord round about His people'; or 'He hath set the round world so fast that it cannot be moved.' While all over the earth and among all nations 'the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handywork.'

If we turn from the Hebrew prophets to the Greek mythology we seem to find indications of a time before history, before poetry, of which the analysis of language is the only witness, when the Hellenic gods were powers of nature which in the course of ages became individualized and personified. We have a difficulty in believing this, because in the writings

or the ages which we know, the traces of such a connexion between the gods and heroes and the Sun or the dawn or the air have disappeared, and the divinities are only magnified men and women, or in a few cases the native gods of the elements. And the Greek or Roman poets, although not wholly wanting in feeling for the beauty of scenery, have much less consciousness of nature than is to be observed in the poetry of most modern European nations. Or perhaps they may have felt as much, but they spoke less; their souls may have drunk in the impressions derived from the deep blue sea, the clear ether, the forms and colours of the landscape, and been moulded by them; but they do not seem to have connected them, as we do, with the thoughts and aspirations of the human heart, or to have found in them the symbols of a world beyond.

In our own century, which seems likewise more than any other to have the power of recalling the past, the sentiment of nature again revives; recollections of childhood are still lingering about the maturity or old age of the world, as we may say, speaking in a figure. The poets of our own age have heard voices in nature which were silent or uninterpreted in the days before them. Scientific discoveries, too, to those who can follow them, give a new interest to 'the meanest flower that breathes.' And a portion of this spirit extends to the ordinary observer and the common mind. Every one exults in the fresh air,

in the pleasant woodland scene, in the wide prospect, in the illimitable ocean. In nature we find that which we all desire—repose: there one of the best and purest pleasures of life comes to us, healthier than the love of art, which sometimes degenerates into sentimentalism, a pleasure of which we can never have too much, and which seems as we grow older to have a more soothing power over us; there the heart that cannot speak may find the alleviation of a calamity too deep for tears, for into that undisturbed region no trouble or sorrow intrudes: there is a great calm, and the peace and order which reign around us may be transferred to our own erring minds. And through the influence of nature we may rise to think of the God of nature and to rest in Him.

Still, there are thoughts about nature which do from time to time arouse disquietude in our minds. The Universe is so vast and we are so small. It is not the language of hyperbole but of fact when we speak of innumerable stars which exist everywhere in the infinity of space, compared with which the life of any individual man is only like a grain of sand, a leaf of the forest, a drop of water spilt upon the earth. Nor is the overpowering thought at all lessened, but the wonder increased, when some one tells us that the world is infinite in minuteness as well as in vastness. We say with a meaning which could not have been equally present to the Psalmist, and perhaps with a sadder accent: 'Lord, what is man that Thou art

mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?' When, again, we consider the immeasurable periods of time during which the earth was a desert chaos torn by natural convulsions, or the later stages of the world's history, in which the animals were struggling for existence, and huge behemoths and leviathans moved upon land and water: or, later still, when the first traces of man appear in holes of the rocks or lacustrine dwellings—do we not feel a sort of discouragement? and the consciousness of law in all things which had once comforted us begins to terrify us. We are aware that nature, like art, though more beautiful and glorious far, is not the true image of God, and that 'not there, not there,' are the foundations of human life to be sought.

And now we meet with another downfall and discouragement. For we are told in books which are in the hands of every one that man is descended from the lower animals. The whole vegetable and animal kingdoms are affirmed to have originated in some primaeval form, and the different species of plants and animals to have become diversified in infinite ages by the 'survival of the fittest.' To understand this theory, I suppose that we must go back in imagination to a time when there was no distinction of birds, beasts, and fishes, or even of plants and animals. As in some ancient Cosmogony (for this is a Cosmogony of a new kind) the forms of life began to move, and organized structures came into being; and then,

slowly and ever more slowly (for there is no need of hurry when you have no limit of time), some faded away and disappeared, and others persisted and prevailed, at first abnormal in some of their parts, but in a succession of generations growing into harmony with themselves. Last of all, in countless millions of years, passing through many stages of half human, half animal existence, man was perfected; his coat of hair fell off, and his brain increased in size; his features became nobler and more expressive, and he walked upright upon the earth.

I think we must acknowledge that this theory, whether true or false, makes a painful impression on the minds of many of us. It deprives us of our golden age to which we as well as the Greeks looked back: it seems to take not only individual men, but the whole race of mankind, out of the providence of God: and it touches our pride as well as our higher feelings to be told that we, who in the language of the Psalmist seem to be a little lower than the angels, are really the descendants of the animals. May not man, if he too is only one of the animals, determine to live and die like the animals? Or at least may not his self-respect be impaired and partially lost, as we may imagine to be the case with some scion of a noble house, who is suddenly informed that all his life long he has been mistaken and that he was really of ignoble birth? Such an announcement might have the effect of degrading him, or he might, upon the revelation

being made to him, become inspired with a desire to win that honour to which he was no longer born. There would be a considerable risk that he might live indulging his pleasures, as well as hope that he could choose the better part. And this risk besets us at the present moment: while we are discussing the descent of man from the animals, and comparing their bodily structure with our own, may we not insensibly be losing that which distinguishes us from them? That which we see or seem to see, or can represent to ourselves under any form of knowledge or figure of speech, too easily takes the place of that which we do not see and which cannot be similarly represented. All knowledge is good, and all serious inquiry and discussion is good, if we are able to follow them. But there may be a temporary disproportion in the parts of knowledge which has an injurious effect on the characters of individuals and on states of society.

There are different ways in which theories such as I have been describing may be met by those who oppose them. First they may be treated with ridicule; but this, although a natural, is not a good way of meeting them. 'Fair creature, do you really suppose, or can I suppose, that you are descended from an ape?' 'And you man, created in the image of God, which will you have for your ancestor, a monkey or an angel?' There is no harm in jests of this sort; after dinner, or at a public meeting, they are amusing enough, if not too often repeated. But this is not

the spirit in which a serious man likes to meet the observations of scientific inquirers; he will not turn the flood of religious prejudices upon them, but try to consider their arguments upon their own merits. Ridicule is the test of weakness or of affectation, but not of truth. And when we remember that forty years ago the same vindications would have been directed against those who maintained the existence of the earth during untold millions of years, and that less than twenty years ago the same incredulous laugh would have been raised at those who affirmed that man had dwelt upon the earth for a hundred thousand or for many hundred thousands of years, although these two facts are now universally admitted by almost all educated men, experience teaches us caution, and we see that we must treat serious things seriously, or the laugh may be turned against ourselves. Especially when we argue from the pulpit we ought to be careful not to supply the chasm in our reasoning by rhetoric, believing that no one does more harm to religion or tends more to undermine the Christian faith than he who appeals eloquently to our religious feelings on behalf of a scientific untruth, or a conclusion not warranted by facts.

I am not going to ridicule or misrepresent the writings of a great naturalist whose genius and character are deserving of our utmost respect. His speculations are the honest result of studies in which very few of us can follow him. It would be almost as impertinent

in me to praise him as to attempt to criticize him in his own field. I only say these few words lest I should seem to be wanting in respect to one of the greatest living Englishmen. But I think that we who are not naturalists may be allowed to view this famous theory in the light of general considerations. We hear it spoken of everywhere; it seems to touch our own lives; we cannot easily shake off the impressions which it makes upon our minds. A discoverer is not always the best judge of his own discoveries; he is apt to become enamoured of them, and is unable to assign them their due proportions. The very intensity of mind which inspired him with the thought of them prevents his placing himself outside them and calmly reviewing them. He is lost in the light of them; he sees them everywhere, and cannot allow himself to anticipate the judgement which posterity may pass upon him. The absorbing influence of one idea is apt to make us regardless or unobservant of facts which lead in an opposite direction. This theory has served to draw into light one class of phenomena; the discovery of some other general law, of which the nature cannot yet be foreseen, may serve to collect facts of another kind. Therefore no true friend of science will be jealous of our hesitating, or perhaps delaying a little, when implicit assent is demanded to a great generalization. We are certainly not wrong in asking to know with some precision what are the limits of this generalization, which is threatening to

swallow up all science. We shall do well to consider what it does not explain, as well as what it does. Add to this that general ideas exercise a great power over us; they are very fascinating and attractive; the simplest account always seems to be the truest—one idea is better than two—although there may really be in the working of nature and in the causes of historical events a subtlety and complexity far beyond human thoughts to reach. The attraction is irresistible when the animal or vegetable kingdom is capable or supposed to be capable of being explained in two words. We are very much inclined to believe what we so easily apprehend. Then again our teacher may be an observer of nature, and the general ideas of which I have been speaking may be supported by innumerable minute and curious facts, and thus acquire the name and authority of inductive science. But we must not therefore infer that the minute facts are adequate or sufficient to prove the principle assumed. A theory which is true partially will easily claim to be universal—the 'may' soon passes into a 'must.' In the void of human knowledge any account is better than none. And I need hardly observe that mere calmness of style, though an admirable quality, is no proof of the soundness of an argument; the greatest fallacies may be most clearly expressed, and the greatest untruths are sometimes found in the most logical and consecutive writings.

In what remains of this sermon I shall venture to

offer some remarks on the famous theory to which I have been referring, and which I will consider, first of all, from the intellectual side. There are some reasons why we should suspend our judgement, and not hastily decide that natural selection or the survival of the fittest is the sole or chief cause of the diversities of animal life. Secondly, without determining whether this theory is true or untrue, or in what degree true, of which we can only judge in a very general manner, I shall endeavour to lay before you some considerations of another kind, which may be placed in the opposite scale, tending to show that, whatever may be the origin of man, when we regard him as a moral and religious being we are concerned, not with what he has been, but with what he is. Whether his history is a progress or a decline, whether he has risen from the animals or fallen from some other sphere, he remains what he was before, endowed with reason and conscience, capable of knowing God and of contemplating His works. When the shock of novelty is over, he resumes the even path of a Christian life.

1. Must we not begin by asking the question: Whether this theory is the whole explanation of the origin of man and animals, or a part only? And if a part, what part—a fifth, a tenth, a twentieth? for we are obliged to recall our minds by numbers from the influence of imagination. In the persistence of the strongest, in the survival of the fittest, we recognize

a true cause of change in the forms of animal life: the question to which we have as yet no distinct answer is—How far has the operation of this cause extended? Or, if we are answered that this is the only one, and that there is no other, because in infinite ages the least cause, like the trickling of a stream, may produce the greatest effects—and with due regard to the economy of the world we ought not to assume two causes when one is sufficient—we wonder how there can be any knowledge of this exhaustive nature. May there not have been an adaptation of animals to their circumstances, such as is supposed in another famous theory, which in the course of infinite ages—that unknown quantity has always to be added—may have also modified them? May there not have been latent in the bosom of nature other causes which we are unable to calculate—changes of atmosphere, epidemics, diseases, currents of air or water, rapid alternations of heat and cold, different proportions of the elements, or perhaps causes the very nature of which is unknown to us, as much as electricity was to the ancients or to the scientific inquirer of two centuries ago? These are the reflections which strike even an unlearned person. The mystery of reproduction is the greatest of all the mysteries of animal life, and most likely to be affected by subtle influences. And may not the instincts of animals, like the reason of man, have had the effect sometimes of preserving the weakest as well as the strongest? When we think of

some of the more wonderful phenomena of animal life, of the polities of ants and bees, and of the intelligence of some of the larger animals, we can hardly tell how far nature may have developed instincts of concert and self-defence, which would prevent them from being passive victims of the struggle for existence.

Again, the terms which are used in these speculations are to a great extent ambiguous. When we speak of 'evolution,' or 'development,' or even of the more familiar terms, force, cause, law, we are insensibly generalizing in a single word processes which may be infinitely various and belong to different spheres of knowledge. The laws of mind are not the same as the laws of external nature; nor the history of the human mind the same as the history of external nature. The evolution of thought is altogether different from the evolution of the animal creation. Are we not transferring the language of physics to metaphysics? Nor is the expression 'survival of the fittest' free from ambiguity. For who are the animals fittest to survive? Not necessarily those who are externally most in harmony with their circumstances or framed on the most symmetrical model. In animals, as in men, there may have been some hidden force which would more than compensate for adverse external conditions, like that hidden force in human constitutions which gives longevity, and is partly the same with health and strength, partly different from them. Amid varying circumstances and in infinite

ages can any one say what forces may have acted in the regular course of nature?

Passing on to the condition of man, we are ready to acknowledge that man is an animal, and dependent like other animals in his bodily structure on physiological laws. We seem to trace also in animals the rudiments of many human qualities good and bad. There is jealousy and strife and a natural state of warfare among many of them; there is vanity among the birds of the air, like the vanity of dress or of personal attractions among human beings; there is subtlety and craft, which enables them to get an enemy into their power or to defend themselves against him; there are also vestiges of the higher qualities of gratitude, of family attachment, of devotion to a master; and they seem to be capable of a sense of honour or duty, and of distinguishing between hurt and injury. Their likeness to us doubtless gives them an additional claim on our sympathy: as has been well said, 'Humanity towards the lower animals is one of the best tests of the civilization of a nation.' Nor can we deny to them a certain amount of progress, any more than we can affirm that man is always progressing. They too have their polities and a sort of society; they imitate one another and learn of one another; they are not without a limited reason which sometimes enables them to meet new circumstances; and like mankind they have a latent and apparently inherited experience.

But after making all these allowances, the distance is not sensibly diminished between man and the lower animals. Even in his external characteristics the difference is enormous. How in any struggle for existence could the brain of man have been developed, which is said to be three times as great in proportion to his size as that of any known animal? How did he acquire his upright walk, or the divisions of his fingers, or the smoothness of his skin, all which might be useful or suitable to him in his human condition, but could not have tended to preserve him in the previous struggle? How did he learn to make or use tools, and especially the greatest of all of them, that is, fire? Who taught him language, or gave him the power of reflecting on himself, or imparted to him the reverence for a superior being, of which there seem to be no traces among the animals? We look at pictures in which the bones of men, or, perhaps the early forms of existence before birth, are shown to be more alike than we in our ignorance had supposed. But we always knew that there were real resemblances between men and the animals, and a few degrees more or less make no differences worth speaking of. For we observe that the approximation, though striking to the eye, is not in what is characteristic of man, but in what is not characteristic of him. Still the chasm remains not really lessened between the jabbering of animals and the language of man, between the stationariness of animals and the progress of man,

between the instinct or imitative powers of animals and the reason of man.

And when we complain that the links are missing which are required to prove the continuity of human and animal life, we are told in reply that the record is fragmentary; that a few pages out of the whole book, a few lines out of each page are alone preserved to us. Are we not then being asked to decide the question having a very small part of the evidence before us? If the disproof is taken away, is not the proof also taken away? A writing which is crossed, which is inverted, which is disguised, may almost always be deciphered; but that of which the greater part is lost cannot be deciphered with certainty, because the part which is lost may probably affect the meaning of that which has been preserved. If we had the whole record before us do we suppose that our conclusions would remain unaltered? No naturalist has as yet been able to give a satisfactory account of the different species of man, in which the differences seem to be least: can we entirely trust them when they speak to us of his origin? Shall we not rather wait and see whether, in a few years, when we are no longer under the dominion of a new idea, this famous theory, though admitted to be a valuable contribution to natural history, may no longer be regarded as an exhaustive account of the origin of men and animals? Hypothesis is a most gracious aid to science, but is there

not a danger of the exact sciences becoming inexact if they are allowed to entertain conjectures so far in advance of facts?

2. Physical science seems to be making great progress amongst us, and is likely to have considerable effects upon morality and religion. We may welcome this new knowledge, and gratefully acknowledge that many improvements in the physical, and indirectly in the moral, state of mankind are derived from it. But we must acknowledge that there is a risk of one part of knowledge becoming disproportioned to the rest. If, as some dream, we were to attempt to place life on a merely physical basis, the noblest things in the world, the greatest examples of men and the highest fruits of mind, would disappear; for these would be substituted mere physical improvement, and possibly actions which are now regarded as crimes might become virtues. Health and comfort and happiness are good, but there are higher goods, virtue and truth and the service of God; and as rational beings we cannot pursue after the one without seeking for the other.

Turning now to this other aspect of the subject, I shall endeavour to bring to your minds some considerations tending to counteract these materializing influences, which seem to cloud human life as time goes on.

Let us consider that the highest and best things on earth appertaining to the inner life of man, such as the

resolute struggle against evil (whether the lesser struggle against the evil of our own hearts, or the greater struggle in some public arena), the living or perhaps dying for others, the priceless value of innocence, the disinterested heroism of affection, the thoughts of great men in other ages, the battles which have been fought on behalf of the truth, the example and teaching of our Saviour, still remain what they were, though for a time our thoughts may have been turned in another direction. There is an instinct of a future which is higher than the state in which we live, not that kind of instinct which we have in common with the brutes, but an instinct of another sort, which seems to grow stronger in us as we become better. There is a faith that when we are no longer the servants of our own or other men's prejudices or passions, but are seeking to live in purity and truth, God is revealing Himself to us. There is a voice within us which is always repeating, in fainter or in louder accents, that we must avoid the evil and choose the good; that we were placed here not to do our own will, but to follow Christ; that we are not to pass our lives in indolence, but to be up and doing in the service of God, and not desiring our own honour, but for the sake of the work possessing our souls in sincerity and truth.

These do not cease to be, or to be obligations on us, because the past history of man is shown to be in some important respects different from what we once

supposed, or because the action of the mind is proved to be connected with the nerves of the brain, or because the Gospel narrative is sometimes viewed by the light of a microscopic criticism. I know that in the present day we cannot avoid reading books which come into conflict with popular views of religion, or, perhaps, with the simple teaching of a Christian home, and for a time they make a great impression upon us. But we soon recover the balance of our minds; we see that there are some things true and some things false in these books; and that none of them have overturned the Christian religion, though many of them have considerably affected the opinions of Christians. For the truth that is in them we are thankful: if they have freed us from error and superstition they have done us a service; though they may not have guided us into any higher truth they may have diminished the differences which separate us from other men and from other religions; or they may have taught us not to confound the accidents with the substance of religion. Still, we may say with St. Paul: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ,' or of our brethren? If we ever had any, that remains: the more real our religion is the less we are liable to be shaken by intellectual convulsions. If a man fancies that his faith is failing him, he must try to build up in deeds what he is losing in words; he must find meeting places of philosophy and religion, such as humility, or the sense of duty, or the acknowledgement of the

ignorance of man, or the consciousness that he is not of the world, or seeking the things of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. He must be desirous to live, even in the truth which he knows not. He may be asking himself what more he can do for others; what more for his own good. He may mean the same thing, or nearly the same thing, as Christians in general, and yet hardly venture to use any of their expressions. He must consider how he can acquire in this floating world some strength or fixedness of character; not merely receiving impressions from books, or passing from Christianity to the influence of art and back again, but having some short and simple principles like those of the Hebrew prophets ingrained in him—'to do justice, to love truth, and to walk humbly with God.'

There is nothing really opposed in religion and science, though there are many false oppositions as well as false reconcilements of them. But we must be content to see in times of transition their paths diverge when the one goes forward and the other remains behind, or when the vigour of youth in the one comes into conflict with the traditions of antiquity in the other. Meanwhile, let us not be too much the servants of the hour, falling under the dominion of this or that theory which happens to be in the air, but balancing the present with the future and with the past, and not forgetting the great thoughts of other ages in the progress of natural knowledge or

of material well-being. Still, we know that the advancing tide of natural science cannot be driven back; nor is there the least reason to suppose that the sentiment of religion will ever be banished from the human heart; and this consideration may lead us to expect a time when they may be reconciled, if not perfectly, yet more than at present; when religion may be enlightened, extended, purified, and philosophy or science inspired and elevated, and both allied together in the service of God and man.

And even now we can imagine individuals in whom no such opposition is found to exist, whose minds shrink from no investigation, and are not startled by any real conclusions from facts; who have a sense of the perfect innocence of critical inquiries into Scripture and speculations about the origin of man, and yet live in faith and in communion with God, and are impartial, not because they have no religion, but because they leave the result with Him. They are sensible that God has assigned them a work which is as much His work as the preaching of the Gospel by ministers of religion. Regarding all truth as a revelation of God, they have no egotism which leads them to maintain their own ideas or discoveries in preference to those of others. They receive the wonders of nature like the kingdom of God in the Gospel, knowing that in a few years their powers will begin to fail, and this will be the only way in which they can receive

them. Already they seem to themselves like children playing upon the sands of the ocean. And in the hour of death, when their eyes close upon external nature, they know that He is mindful of them, and that to Him they will return.

II

GREEK AND ORIENTAL RELIGIONS[1].

AND OTHER SHEEP I HAVE, WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD: THEM ALSO I MUST BRING, AND THEY SHALL HEAR MY VOICE; AND THERE SHALL BE ONE FOLD, AND ONE SHEPHERD. JOHN X. 16.

THE teaching of our Lord was originally designed for His own people. It was not a philosophy, but a life—the life of a private man standing in no relation to the political differences or to the religious controversies of his age. He was not a formal teacher who laid down abstract principles, but He 'went about doing good,' and gracious words dropped from His lips which drew men's hearts towards Him. The lesson was relative to the occasion, called out by some word of His disciples, by some want of the multitude—'having nothing to eat'—by some incident happening in the temple of Jerusalem, by the changing aspect of His own life as the Jewish nation accepted or rejected His message, by the doom which He saw was impending over them. He went up once or oftener to the national feasts; He sat at meat with Lazarus and his sisters, with Zacchæus, at the house of Simon; He

[1] Preached at Balliol, Nov. 1877.

lived habitually among the common people. When men gathered to Him, He spoke to them—out of a boat, in a synagogue, on a mountain, in the courts of the temple; and His words were instinct with a divine love and power; when the eye saw Him it blessed Him, when the ear heard Him it gave witness to Him. He sought to create in men the feeling which absorbed His own being, that 'they were the sons of God.' So simple and natural is the life of Christ, like the life of any other man, only greater and better; and yet through this simple and natural life a light is shed which reaches the controversies of after ages and the history of the world. There is no reason to suppose that our Lord had ever passed beyond the borders of Israel or entered into any Gentile city. Hence He did not come across that great controversy which agitated the first century of the Christian Church, the relation of the Jewish to the Gentile converts. He had no occasion to lay down in so many words the general principle which thirty years afterwards was affirmed by St. Paul, that God was not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; yet by a sort of anticipation or inspiration, under a figure or parable, He implies the same when He says: 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, that there may be one fold, and one shepherd'; or again in a similar spirit, but with a still deeper meaning, carrying our thoughts beyond churches and controversies to the eternal relations of

God and man: 'Be ye therefore the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth His rain upon the just and upon the unjust.'

Thus we may think of Christ not only as the founder of the Christian Church, but as the uniter or reconciler of many churches to Himself and to one another. We may think of Him also as restoring all men everywhere, the bad and the good, the just and the unjust, to the fatherhood of God. The divisions of Christians have passed into a byword. The hatreds of those who profess to be followers of Christ are deeper and more lasting than any others, handed down from generation to generation like blood-feuds among barbarous tribes. The same spirit of alienation is observable among nations, and among different classes in the same nation, even in our own humane and civilized age. There are not many persons who habitually regard all other men of all ranks, religions, races, as equally with themselves God's creatures. Yet there is also an uneasy feeling among us that all this is not as it should be. The best men seem to be free from such enmities and narrownesses; in the hour of death there are few who retain them, and we sometimes dwell with satisfaction on the hope that in another world they will have passed away. There will be no more Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, Dissenter or Churchman, master or servant, but all one in Christ Jesus. We know also that our

prayers and aspirations cannot in a day change the customs of society; that the deep lines which separate ancient forms of religion will outlast our lifetime. Nor can we say how far political or ecclesiastical measures may be able to effect the union of different religious communions. But one thing is clear that, if such hopes are to be realized at all, a Christian or Catholic spirit must have prepared the way for their fulfilment; then the walls of Jericho may fall down of themselves. And although the prospects of unity and peace in the Church and the world may be far off, yet every one may cherish them in his own heart; and it makes a great difference in our feelings and actions whether we think of a Church one and indivisible, embracing all ages and all races and classes of mankind, or whether our idea of the Christian Church is confined to that visible portion of it in which we worship, and vainly seek amid all varieties of circumstances to force upon a reluctant world.

I purpose in this sermon to speak to you of the spirit of unity, which I shall consider in two ways. First, as it affects our feelings or attitude towards non-Christian races and religions, whether towards the classical nations of antiquity or to the great religions of the East. Both these are in fact very near to us; the literature and history of the classical nations forming the basis of our higher education; the other constantly crossing our path in foreign travel, in commerce, in the fulfilment of political duties. Secondly,

I will consider, but on another occasion, the same principle as it touches our relations with other Christian Churches or sects who, equally with ourselves, acknowledge the Christian rule of faith and duty. These are nearer home; their members live among us, often in the same street or house; and the peace and political well-being of the community depends greatly on the feelings which we entertain towards them, and they towards us. But, lest I should weary you by crowding too many important topics into the space of a brief half hour, I will defer the second division of the subject to another day.

In former ages the religion of Christ was the antagonist of every other. Its attitude was necessarily one of hostility to the Gentile world. It waged an interminable war, not only against the vices of the heathen, but against their literature and philosophy. To the first Christians they were 'knowledge falsely so called,' and it was even debated among them whether any of the great teachers of antiquity had been saved. Soon the Church began to fight against the world, not with spiritual weapons, but empire against empire, the Pagan empire against the Christian, the Athanasian against the Arian. The struggle was renewed in what is called the conversion of the barbarians. Once more the banner of the Cross was unfurled against the Crescent, and the Moslem was for a time thrust out of the sacred places of Christians. Then, stimulated by victory, the arms of Christians turned upon

one another, and for six centuries and more, in the Albigensian crusade, at the time of the Reformation, during the Thirty Years' War, the history of Christianity has been an almost continuous tale of strife and bloodshed. And, inherited from these conflicts, which are not yet ended, there has been a sentiment or feeling of antipathy to those of a different faith which has sunk deep into human nature. Men have divided the world into heathen and Christian, without considering how much good may have been hidden in the one, or how much of evil may have mingled with the other. They have compared the best part of themselves with the worst of their neighbours, the ideal of Christianity with the corruptions of Greece or the East. They have not aimed at impartiality, but have been contented to accumulate all that could be said in praise of their own, and in dispraise of other forms of religion. At every turn such prejudices meet us, and often in this, as well as in former ages, have had a certain influence in our conduct towards half civilized or barbarous races. To make them Christians might be an object worthy of us, but until they become Christians we seem to have no duties towards them. The same narrow spirit has perverted our notions of education. Persons who had to explain the apparent anomaly of the youth of a Christian country being engaged in the study of the heathen writers, have maintained that the real advantage of a classical education was no more than this,

that it teaches us by contrast the superiority of Christianity. Even the word heathen, instead of being regarded according to its etymology as the equivalent of Gentiles or nations, has received what logicians would call a bad connotation. Yet how unnatural is all this, and how unlike the true spirit of the Gospel. Christ Himself is the first teacher of toleration when He says of the prophet who was not numbered among His followers, 'Forbid him not'; or again, looking forward to the future ministry of His disciples, 'Pray for them that persecute you.' In a similar spirit St. Paul says: 'Bless them that persecute you, bless and curse not'; and, instead of confining the grace of God to the elect or to the Jewish people, he lays down the broad principle that there is no respect of persons with God, but that, as is elsewhere added, 'in every nation he that feareth Him and doeth righteously is accepted of Him.' In the Church, too, of after ages there is a better voice heard at intervals; the corruptions of Christians are condemned by the virtues of heathens. When the truth was forced upon the early Christians that among the Gentiles also there was a faith in a divine mind, and a hope of immortality, and a desire to live above the world, then they began to recognize that here, too, there had been the spirit of God working; they found in Greek philosophy, as in the law and the prophets, a second witness to the truth of the Gospel and another schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. And since there has ceased to be

a living antagonism between Christianity and the extinct religions of Greece and Rome, the two have ever been silently intermingling and marrying, so that we can no longer separate them, the old philosophy supplying some instrument of thought or some element of politics or ethics to the Catholic system, until in a Christian country we can scarcely distinguish which portion of the truth has been received by us from a Gentile, which from a Jewish or Christian source.

And so with ourselves, when we travel or read the accounts of travellers in any eastern country; our first impression is something like that of St. Paul when he stood upon the Areopagus, that the people are wholly given to idolatry. We see or read of temples full of idols, of cruel and barbarous rites still practised, of licentiousness in the garb of religion, of a shocking and degrading asceticism. But when we look a little below the surface we find, at any rate in all the great religions of the world, a higher witness still present with them. The conscience of men is not dead; they are feeling after God if haply they may find Him. Just as we often remark about individuals from whom distance or prejudice has estranged us, that they are much better and more like ourselves than we anticipated before we knew them, so we may observe about these strange religions; as we approach them nearer, we find that they bear the lineaments of a common human nature. Many forms of organization, many

disputes about doctrine which we fancied to be peculiar to ourselves, reappear in them. The distinctions of clergy and laity, the institution of monasticism, exist in several of them; the opposition of faith and works, the doctrine of a sacrifice for the sins of men, are not wanting in them. They too have their difficulties about necessity and free will, their reconciliation of philosophy and faith, their attempts to harmonize new thoughts with old writings handed down by tradition, their differences about inspiration; like the East in general, a little caricaturing our more sober Western thoughts; and the art of interpretation has been carried further by them than any of our Western commentators. At every turn the student of Brahmanism or Buddhism or Mahometism, or of the ancient records of Assyria and Egypt, with a thrill of interest comes across some striking parallelism with the language or thoughts of the Old and New Testament, or the practices of the Christian Church; and far more interesting than these parallelisms of literary style or ceremonial is the fact that in every great religion there have been a few who have sought to pierce through the outward forms of religion to its true nature, who, like the prophets in the Old Testament, have seen the truth of Christ under other names, who have cast aside the local and temporal, and rested in the invisible and the eternal.

There is probably no cause now working in the world, neither criticism nor the progress of natural

science, nor the power of great political movements, which will so greatly affect the future history of Christianity as our increased acquaintance with other religions. Mankind have lived in comparative isolation hitherto; now knowledge coming from the ends of the earth, and from the most remote ages, pours in upon us like a flood, obscuring some of our ancient landmarks, but also creating in us a sense such as we never had before, that we are one family, to whom God has spoken at sundry times and in divers manners, of whom no one member has been altogether banished or expelled from Him. The mere feeling of this leads us to regard the world under a different aspect, no longer as lying under the shadow of His wrath, but as pitied and accepted of Him; no longer as dwelling in darkness, but with a partial light. The basis on which we rest seems to be firmer and wider than formerly: there are many more witnesses than we supposed to the first principles of religion. And there are other ways in which the knowledge of other creeds enlightens us about our own. Who that has his mind fixed on the great forms of religion which have endured for ages in the East can think much of the petty disputes which sometimes agitate the minds of Christians in our own day, and are carried on with such extraordinary heat and bitterness, concerning the use of a word, a vestment, a posture, a colour? Who can think much of these things, if he reflects on the greater differences which have divided the human

race during so many ages, and remembers that the same trivialities which agitate ourselves have been rife in other times and countries? For the corruptions of religion, the illusions of religion, the external form of religion, seem in different degrees to be common to all of them; the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world shines only sparingly and at intervals.

The greatest lesson which the religious history of mankind teaches us is that, laying aside the ceremonial and external, we should cling to the moral and spiritual. For this is the high and permanent element of religion; it is also the element to the recognition of which in its fulness very few attain, and from these few a noble rule of life has been imparted to mankind, and the thoughts of many hearts have been reflected in them. Such a view of religion, instead of dividing the world more and more, is a peacemaker between nations and races; men more easily approach those with whose creed they have some degree of sympathy; they are more readily received by them when they can present them with a truth, not antagonistic to their own better thoughts, but in harmony with them. It is hard to transplant our sects and forms of worship to some Eastern land, to carry thither customs and usages which are familiar to us but have no root in other countries, to convey over the sea an ecclesiastical hierarchy and even the history of the English Church. But it is not really difficult, or at

least the difficulty is of another kind, to appeal from the worse to the better nature of men, to quicken the higher thought which lies buried in them, to lead them onward through their own feelings of reverence, not in spite of them. This is missionary work in which every one may engage, and not the ordained minister only, which may be carried on by a private person, giving offence to no one, elevating and purifying the circle in which he moves. And if some one says that the distinctive character of Christianity is thus likely to be lost, and that we are approaching too near to the condemned doctrine 'that every one shall be saved by the sect which he professeth, provided he be diligent to form his life accordingly,' we may answer that such was in fact the way in which Jews and Gentiles both alike received the Gospel, not as a truth wholly new or antagonistic to them, but as confirmed by their own religion or philosophy. The law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ; and to Him bore all the prophets witness, and the new commandment was an old one. So in other nations there were antecedents of the Christian faith, the growing consciousness of the brotherhood of mankind, the increasing sense of the unity of God. For ideas must be given through something; men cannot in an instant lay aside all their traditions. The old and the new must be harmonized for them; the new wine cannot be put into old bottles, or the new cloth sewed on to old garments. In the second place this

wider conception of revelation is forced upon us by a wider experience such as neither the first ages nor any other have possessed hitherto. Thirdly, in what I have said nothing is implied of which the germ is not already contained in many passages of Scripture, such as the words, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God and doeth righteousness is accepted of Him.'

Yet higher and more ideal than any outward or visible Church is the invisible, of which our conception is more abstract and distant, and therefore more vacant and shadowy. It is described in the words of the Bidding Prayer as 'the congregation of faithful men dispersed throughout the world.' But who they are no eye of man can discern! For the wheat and the tares grow together in this world, and many are called but few are chosen, and many are hearers but not doers of the word, and the first shall be last and the last first; and there are other sheep not of this fold, and there are those who have not seen and yet have believed. There are nominal Christians who are in no sense real Christians; and, on the other hand, in distant lands there are those to whom Christ in His individual person was never known, who, nevertheless, have had the temper of Christ, and in a way of their own have followed Him: all these are included in the invisible Church. It is a great fellowship of those who have lived for others and not for them-

selves, for the truth and not for the opinion of men only, above the world and not merely in it. It is a communion of souls and of good men everywhere and in all ages, who, if they could have known one another and the Lord, would have acknowledged that they were animated with a common spirit, and would have loved and delighted in one another. And we, too, feel that in the thought of this there is comfort and strength; we rejoice in the consciousness that here in this congregation, and everywhere to the furthest limits of the world, there are those who stand in the same relation towards God which, as we hope, it may be granted to us to attain; and that, as many have gone before, many are coming after to work out His will in this life and in another.

But sometimes there has been a confusion in the minds of men, and they have sought to clothe the visible Church in the attributes of the invisible, or to narrow the invisible Church to the visible. The kingdom of God, which is without, has been lighted up with the glories of the heavenly kingdom, the Church of history has been transformed into the Church of prophecy. For mankind easily perceive that the true ornaments of a church are not gold and silver or any such thing, but the lives of believers; and they fancy that they can infuse into the outward temple some grace and beauty of another sort. So the ancient philosophers intentionally, and also unintentionally, confused the actual or possible constitution

of the state regulated by law and custom with that ideal of the perfect state which existed in a dream only, or in the heart of man. So Plato in a well-known passage of the *Republic*[1], which reminds us of the transitions of the Gospels, may be said to pass from the kingdom of God which is without to the kingdom of God which is within us. At the end of the ninth book of the *Republic* he says: 'Then if that be his motive he will not be a statesman?' 'By the dog of Egypt (the strange oath of Socrates), by the dog of Egypt he will! in the city which is his own he certainly will, though in the land of his birth, perhaps not, unless he have a divine call.' 'I understand,' is the reply, 'you mean that he will be ruler in that city of which we are the founders, and which exists in idea only, for I do not believe that there is such an one anywhere on earth.' 'In heaven,' replies Socrates, 'there is laid up a pattern of it, methinks, which he who desires may behold, and, beholding, may set his house in order.'

[1] *Plato*, Jowett's Translation, iii. 306.

III

GROWTH IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD[1]

GOD FORBID: FOR THEN HOW SHALL GOD JUDGE THE WORLD?

ROMANS iii. 6.

THE simplest truths of religion are also the deepest and most inexhaustible. They are everywhere around us, like the air which we breathe, and yet we are hardly conscious of their presence. They seem to grow up in us naturally by the light of reason and conscience; they are the established beliefs of the age or country in which we live. All men are agreed in holding them, and there is nothing new to be said about them.

They may be summed up in two or three propositions which nobody would deny, as for example: God is just; God is true; He governs the world by fixed rule; He is the Author of our being; He knows and sees all things. And yet these simple propositions seem to be always in danger of being lost. They become truisms or commonplace. They are laid on the shelf, and exercise no great influence over life.

[1] Preached before the University.

The most trifling controversy of the day has a deeper interest for us than the great question of all religion, the nature and character of God. Few persons have ever seriously inquired into the evidence supplied by their own nature, and by the course of the world, of the manner of God's dealings with them. And while holding the beliefs of the divine perfection in a lazy, unmeaning way, they have allowed all sorts of other beliefs to spring up in their minds which are practically inconsistent with this. They have not said: 'No, that is impossible, because it contradicts the divine justice or the divine goodness'; 'That is impossible, because it contradicts the divine truth'; or, in the impetuous language of the Apostle, 'Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar'; or, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' These are the tests to which all systems of theology must at last be brought, the human, or rather the divine, ideas of truth and right and goodness and love.

I purpose to speak in this sermon of our simplest conceptions of the divine nature. And first I shall consider what these are, and how far they can be said to accord with our experience of the world; and secondly I shall show how the primary conceptions of God have been violated, not only in the religions of the Gentiles, but in many ideas of the divine nature which have been held by Christian teachers. And thirdly I shall point out how to these we return as the final result of all our

knowledge of divine things, and that they are the fixed principles or anchors of the soul which hold us fast amid the waves of time in life and death.

As I have already remarked, there would be no great difference about the language in which we should describe the Divine Being. We should use words derived from human goodness, because we have no other. But while we should admit that they are applied to God in a transcendent sense, transferred from the finite to the infinite, we should insist that they have essentially the same meaning in both uses of them. For example, when we say that God is just, we do not mean to attribute to Him a quality which is the reverse of human justice, but only more perfect, such as is proper to One who knows all the circumstances of every case, and has therefore a sort of infinite equity in dealing with them. When we ascribe any of these epithets to God, we mean to affirm that at any rate He does not fall short of the quality denoted by them in the ordinary human sense of the words. There is no standard to which we can refer the nature of God but our own moral ideas, and if we cast a doubt upon these then we are altogether at sea.

Under the name of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we are worshipping an unknown God, of whom we catch occasional glimpses flashing through the mists and storms which envelop Him. There is a question which the ancient philosophers were fond of raising—Whether there was one virtue or many?

They meant to ask whether all the different virtues were derived from a single principle. So we might ask whether there is one attribute of God or many, and we might sum up all in one word—divine perfection. If we were further to analyse this we should attribute to Him, first, knowledge and power, which seem to be different aspects of the same quality, for to know all things is to be able to do them; secondly, we should attribute to Him truth and justice, which are similarly connected, for truth is the foundation of justice; thirdly, we should attribute to Him goodness —not that easy-going temper or character which sometimes passes under this name among men, but the everlasting purpose that all His creatures should be good even as He is good. Though He might judge them and punish them in this life or another (and this might be the effect of the fixed laws by which He governs the world), yet we should feel confident of His having provided that His banished ones be not expelled from Him. We should not doubt that He who had the power would also have the will to restore men to Himself; or, as the Apostle says: 'So then God concluded all men under sin that He might have mercy upon all.'

The mediaeval saints would have spoken of what they termed 'the enjoyment of God.' And certainly there is great comfort in the thought of a divine perfection—to the good when they are overpowered by the evil of the world; to the evil, too, as soon as

they feel any desire to cast aside the burden of sin, and become conscious of One who wills that they shall be saved. The thought of this perfection might kindle raptures in our minds such as find utterance in the hymns of the Psalmist: 'I will love Thee, O Lord my strength; I will praise Thee with my whole heart'; or might create in us such a sense of confidence and truth as is expressed in the words: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation'; or in that yet deeper strain which is heard in Psalm xc: 'Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation; before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed, Thou art God from everlasting to everlasting'; or might give us such a sense of peace as is expressed in those pathetic words of Psalm xxiii: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' This is the language which the Psalmist uses in all the circumstances of his life; he feels that God is ever present with him; and in all the higher and nobler thoughts which pass his mind he recognizes a divine inspiration. But this is not the language of our hearts; we have not this same joyous confidence in God; at least there are few persons who would be able to find in these words the natural expression of their feelings, partly because we interpose His laws between ourselves and Him, and seem to imagine that He is being hidden from us when He is really being

revealed to us. With how much wider knowledge, with how much deeper feeling, can the modern astronomer look up at the stars and say, 'When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him?' We have given up the notion of the human personality of God, and we have not yet mastered this other conception of a personality clothed in laws.

But there is another reason which lies deeper still. For the truth is that our minds are partly clouded by a doubt—the same doubt which pressed upon the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes—the existence of evil in the world. How is this divine perfection reconcilable with the misery of our poor, with the vice of our criminals, with the disease and death which we see everywhere around us, with the crushing misfortunes which sometimes oppress the good, with the tendencies to evil or with the actual evil which we find in our hearts? That is the difficulty which is pressed upon us, and which some persons use as an argument to make us believe everything; which others adduce as a reason why we should believe nothing. Men will often advance the most monstrous doctrines respecting the character and actions of God. And, when reason and nature alike seem to rebel against some of these statements, they reply, 'How do you account for the existence of evil?' Here is a difficulty which cannot be lightly set aside either in speculation or in practice:

whether a man thinks or feels, there is a dead weight hanging about his neck, darkening his life, which needs to be removed. Is our conception of God to be formed according to that image which exists within us, or to be derived from our experience of evil in the world? That is the question. My brethren, this is an old difficulty which is not now broached for the first time, and to which we cannot expect to have a full answer in this life, because the purposes of God towards us are only revealed in part. But, though unable to wholly remove the difficulty, I think that we may see the direction in which the answer is to be sought. For, first of all, we have no business to say that God either causes or permits evil, but only that He governs the world by fixed laws, within the limits of which good and evil display themselves. He has made the world to be a sort of theatre in which men act their parts. If you say that individuals are sacrificed to the working of these laws, are you not thinking too much of this life only, and not conscious that there may be other states of being in which the meanest creatures here—the cripple, the pauper, the criminal—may have another chance given them, and strike for another goal, and the last become first and the first perhaps last.

Believing in the existence of God, and comparing our own happier lot with that of the poor and suffering whom we see around us, we cannot justify the ways of God to man without maintaining that there is more

than appears; and for that reason, as well as for other reasons, we look forward to a future life. But, secondly, we feel that good is inseparable from evil, and that we can form no distinct conception of the one apart from the other. Both seem to flow equally from the free agency of man, and if we were to deny the existence of evil we should be compelled to deny the existence of good. This shows us that we must not be too certain of our own ideas on this subject, and that some part of the difficulty is due to the use of a word. For if, instead of speaking of the existence of evil in the world, we spoke rather of degrees of perfection or of degrees of imperfection (and what do we mean by evil more than this?), that part of terror which is due to the influence of language would be removed. Logic would no longer be able to stand over us like a hard taskmaster asserting the omnipotence of God, and the existence of evil, and requiring us to draw the conclusion.

But still, I admit that evil under whatever name is a reality which cannot be got rid of by any new use of language. And, though I am afraid of seeming to carry you too far away from home, there is another consideration to which I should wish to draw your attention. It is not the mere existence of evil, but the amount of evil in the world which really depresses us and seems like a load too heavy to be lifted up. And if we could realize to ourselves that the purposes of God are known to us in part only, not merely as

regards another life, but also as regards this; if we could imagine that the evil and disorder which we see around us is but a step or stage in the progress towards order and perfection, then our conception of evil would be greatly changed. Geology tells us of remote ages in which animals wandered over the earth when as yet man 'was not,' and of ages longer and more distant still in which there was no breath or movement of living creature on land or sea. So slowly, and by so many steps, did the earth which we inhabit attain to the fulness of life which we see around us. And I might go on to speak of this world as a pebble in the ocean of space, as no more in relation to the universe than the least things are to the greatest, or to the whole earth. But, that we may not become dizzy in thinking about this, I will ask you to consider the bearing of such reflections, which are simple matters of fact, on our present subject. They tend to show us how small a part, not only of the physical, but also of the moral world, is really known to us. They suggest to us that the evil and suffering which we see around us may be only the beginning of another and higher state of being, to be realized during countless ages in the history of man. That progress of which we think so much, from barbarism to civilization, or from ancient to modern times, may be as nothing compared with that which God has destined for the human race. And if we were living in those happier times, we

should no more think seriously of the misery through which many have attained to that higher state of being than we should think of some bad dream, or dwell on some aberration or perversity of childhood when the character had been formed and had grown up to the stature of the perfect man.

Well, but some one will say, I would rather not be deluded with the prospect of an indefinite future, ten, or twenty, or thirty thousand years hence, when I see and feel wretchedness at my very door, and in my own home, when at this hour during which we are here assembled there are thousands of suffering, hopeless beings to whom life is a burden. How will the millennium of which you speak profit them? I will not repeat what I have said before, that this world would be the most unjust of worlds if there were no other; but there is another reflection which is nearer than that. The evil, the misery, the moral and physical degradation you, who are so much moved at the spectacle, have the power of mitigating, of relieving, of preventing. This millennium, which is so far off, may be brought by you into your own neighbourhood; there may be a kingdom of heaven in a parish at the present hour, as well as in some remote age or another. From you may flow an inspiration of goodness; a breath from another land which may drive away the pestilence. For God has not left us in this world helpless to contend against the power of evil, but has also endowed us with the capacity of resisting

evil, and of removing the circumstances out of which evil grows. And do not let us say, How can we get rid of the difficulty of the existence of the evil? but, How can we get rid of evil? How can we fulfil that purpose with a view to which God has allowed evil to exist? This is the best speculative answer to the difficulty, namely, that we can remove evil; and the best practical answer—for, when we are most actively engaged in doing good to others, then we most strongly feel that the sad experience of evil in the world is really reconcilable with that other image of the divine nature which is presented to us by reason and conscience.

It seems to be a harder task to think of God now than formerly, because we can no longer think of Him as the God of our Church or nation, but of the whole earth, nor of the earth merely, but of myriads of worlds. Yet in all ages, the ages of credulity or faith as well as those of reason and inquiry, the minds of men have been struggling after God if haply they might find Him. The ancient Greek thought that he saw God, first in the likeness of man, not better but greater than himself; then as fate, then as mind; whose providential interference was introduced to meet a difficulty, and who was not so much the just governor of men as the occasional avenger of injustice. Then there came the philosopher who taught that God was good, and the Author of good; that He was true, and could have no occasion to

deceive. Yet even he had no conception of a God who was the God of all nations of the earth. Slowly and partially in the decline of Roman and Greek life, when the different streams of human thought were beginning to meet and mingle, the wiser part of the Gentile world became dimly conscious that God was not the God of the Greeks and Romans, but of all mankind.

Even in the Scriptures too, if we read them attentively, we shall find a similar progressive revelation of the divine nature. In the childhood of the world God walked in the garden and talked with Adam. But in the New Testament we are plainly told that no man hath seen God at any time. In the Book of Exodus we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and in the Book of Genesis that He tempted Abraham; but again in the New Testament that He tempteth no man. And once more in the Old Testament itself we find both the earlier and the later notion. First He visited the sins of the fathers upon the children; secondly, in the prophets there occurs the twice repeated contradiction of this. Henceforth there should be no more this proverb in the house of Israel, 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'; but every soul should bear his own iniquity. And our Lord Himself twice rebuked the popular superstition that temporal calamities are the punishment of sin: first, in the words, 'Think ye that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam

fell were sinners above all the dwellers in Jerusalem?' and again, in the case of the man born blind, when the question is asked Him, 'Master, which did sin, this man or his parents?'

Slowly and gradually, whether with or without Jewish or Christian revelation, have men attained to that degree of clearness of insight into the ways of God of which the human mind seems capable. And again and again they have held the truth in inconsistency, and in the name of Christianity relapsed into Jewish and Gentile error. They have not placed before themselves the attributes of God as the conditions under which they must think of His dealings with man. How, for example, when we speak of God as true, can we imagine that He will see us other than we truly are, or interpose a fiction between Himself and us? Or how can we suppose that He who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, will make our eternal salvation dependent on some accident of place or time, or the performance of some external act? Or how can a just God punish us for what we never did, for what another did, for the mere tendency to evil which is inherent in the nature which He has given us? How can the most sorrowful spectacle that ever was seen upon earth, at which in a figure we may say that the world has been mourning ever since, have given Him pleasure and satisfaction? Will He remedy one injustice by another? Or again, can He inflict a disproportionate punishment on any

of His creatures? The good of society, the improvement of the offender, are the purposes of human punishment. Shall we attribute to the Most Merciful a darker purpose, of which we hardly venture to think or speak? Or shall we not rather thankfully acknowledge that His plans for the improvement of mankind are more perfect, more continuous, than our human schemes of discipline?

The changes which have already taken place in the religious belief of Christians incline us to argue that there will be other changes by which religion and morality may be more perfectly reconciled. Many dark clouds of error and superstition hang about the early ages of the Church, and some of these are hanging about us still; many opinions were held by the best of men in the Nicene Church from which the human mind now shrinks with horror and amazement. Who can believe that the unbaptized infant is consigned to everlasting torments? Yet this was once the orthodox faith of the Christian world. Who can hear without trembling that one mortal sin consciously committed after baptism, almost, if not altogether, excluded the sinner from the hope of salvation? No wonder that men put off baptism until the hour of death. But what a conception both of the nature of God and of the religion of Christ does such a practice imply. Or who is not surprised when he reads that the satisfaction of Christ for the sins of mankind was originally understood to be a satisfaction to the devil,

and not to God? And, strangest of all, perhaps the least error in the use of a word seems to have been thought more displeasing to God than the greatest perfidy or cruelty of emperors, or the corruption of cities and churches.

In the ancient Abyssinian Church, which by some has been thought to have retained the primitive faith more than any other, there was a solemn form of words repeated on certain days of the year. The origin of the custom and the name of the author of the words were unknown; they were supposed by some to have been translated out of another language. The meaning of several of the terms employed in this ancient document was uncertain; and texts were quoted from the Abyssinian Scriptures in support of them which were not found in older and better copies. Nevertheless, the use of this form of words, admitted to be of such uncertain interpretation and authority, was guarded by the most tremendous anathemas, which were uttered by the whole people; and all who did not believe what they could not wholly understand were devoted by them to eternal damnation. And sometimes the anathemas were rolled forth in a sort of triumph to the pealing sound of the organ, and sometimes the innocent voice of a child might be heard gently repeating them. The patriarch of the Abyssinian Church had long wished to put an end to this scandal, for he acknowledged that the words were not to be taken in their natural sense. But

ecclesiastical customs are very tenacious, and are apt to continue long after they are disapproved by reason and conscience.

My brethren, I want to point out to you that, if we insist on retaining all that we have received from antiquity, we must insensibly impair the divine image in the soul. Religion and morality will part company more and more; and we shall either cease to believe in God and a future life at all, or we shall become the victims of every superstition; we cannot draw near to Him if we think of Him only as a being who watches over us in this world, but leaves us to our fate in another.

I am aware that some persons may be displeased with me for saying this. But they would be equally displeased if I were to describe to them the terrors of hell in the language of Tertullian or some other ancient father, or as they are depicted in the writings of that Spanish friar which some of us may have read translated in the works of Bishop Jeremy Taylor. And still more, and more justly, would they be displeased if I was to apply their own doctrine to some one near and dear to them who had led a careless life and died making no sign of repentance. Yet surely it is a dangerous thing to hold religious truth at a distance which we refuse to realize when brought home to us; to begin by violating our first notions of the attributes of God on some slender ground of tradition or doubtful interpretation of isolated texts of Scripture, and

then, as if such doctrines were too dreadful to be entertained, seriously to lay them aside when they begin to be applied to practice.

For indeed the thought of God is awful enough to us without adding terrific and unmeaning consequences. We do not suppose that God is like some foolish father who lets off his children from the punishment which is for their improvement—but rather that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' We know that the will and purpose of God is that we should become like Him; that we should put off the garment of self and put on the Lord Jesus Christ in righteousness and true holiness. Nor can we imagine or believe that this is to be accomplished except by the exertions of our own wills co-operating with His will. And, when we think of our own selfishness, of our absorption in the things of this world and our averseness to another, we feel that this is a great and protracted work which cannot be accomplished without many a struggle and many sharp pangs, which might be described in Scripture language as dividing the body from the spirit, us from ourselves. For, whether we speak of a state of probation in which mankind or the majority of them are to have one chance and then to be cast aside for ever, or of an education which is to begin here and to be carried on through countless ages (and there may be those who are saved, so as by fire), yet we are all agreed in this, that 'without holiness no man shall see

the Lord.' The impure must become pure, the untrue must become simple and true, the thought of God must take the place of the thought of self, there must be no more hatred or party spirit: that 'last infirmity of religious minds' must disappear, the tangle of our own character must be unwoven and woven again before we can appear in His presence.

When we think of another life, which is the second great truth of religion, in the light of the attributes of God, we have a feeling of awe and also of comfort. We know that God will see us as we truly are, and that in our way we are not too fit to meet His searching eye. But we know also that He will take into account all the circumstances of our lives. We are conscious that He is infinitely above us, and that no thought of ours can comprehend Him. But, as we would rather be judged by a great and good man than by one of a meaner sort, we would rather fall, as was said of old, into the hands of God than man. We know too that a perfect God can have no other aim or purpose to accomplish but the perfection of His creatures, if this be possible. The systems of men do not terrify us, or their wild denunciations of one another, whether in this or in former ages; they scarcely last a thousand years, and we know that in them is not always to be found the mind of Christ. And we can rise above them into the clear atmosphere of the justice and goodness of God. But what must strike, I do not say with fear, but with awe, the mind

of any reflecting being is this, that in that other world of which we know so little we have no one on whom we can rely but God only. Let us sometimes be alone with Him in this world, for the time will come when we shall be alone with Him.

IV

THE HEBREW CONCEPTION OF GOD[1].

HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD.

DEUT. vi. 4.

FOLLOWING the plan which was indicated in a former sermon, I shall proceed now to consider the revelation of the divine nature which is made to us in the Old Testament. This we may hereafter compare briefly—first, with Greek and Roman ideas of religion; secondly, with that wider and more universal conception of God which is given us in history, in science, in our own experience, and in the Gospel of Christ.

I am sensible of the difficulty of doing justice to a great subject in the short compass of a sermon. Such a treatment must necessarily appear superficial, inadequate, fragmentary. I would wish you to consider what I am going to say as hints and suggestions only, which you may carry back with you to the study of the Old Testament and make the beginning of thoughts and studies of your own.

[1] Preached at Balliol, April 23, 1876.

The Israelites themselves seem to have been conscious that the revelation of the divine nature had been gradually imparted to them. There may, perhaps, have been a time in their early history when their conception of God did not differ much from those of the surrounding nations, when they may have even given 'the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.' But such a practice, which seems to be authoritatively repudiated in the narrative of Abraham and Isaac, certainly had not survived in the times when the Jews had become a nation. The truth probably is that, as other nations, for example the Egyptians, had much more of spiritual religion than we used to suppose in the days when their ancient records were unknown to us, so the Jews, if we examine the Old Testament critically, had much more of superstition and idolatry than it was once common to acknowledge. These old superstitions, which they had inherited from former ages and which they had in common with other nations, were always clinging to them and returning upon them; and only when the world began to pass out of them the Israelites passed out of them too. What they had peculiar to themselves was not the higher moral or religious sentiment of the whole race, but a few great men of whom other nations have never had the like, who first taught the true nature of God, who sought first to awaken in the minds of their fellow-men the moral and spiritual nature of religion, who stood apart from

existing institutions, and seem to have been not much regarded in their own lifetime or by their own nation, yet whose words have 'lightened every man who cometh into the world.' The writings of the prophets of the seventh and eighth centuries before Christ are the true religion of Israel.

Without attempting to recover what may be termed the prehistoric religion of the Israelites we observe traces of great changes, not unacknowledged by themselves in their thoughts about the divine nature. Once God had been only known to them by the name of Elohim, which scarcely distinguished Him from the other gods of the polytheist peoples who surrounded them, afterwards by the solemn and more abstract title of Jahweh or Jehovah, a word which is connected with the verb of existence, and seems to indicate the permanence of the divine nature. There was a time when God had walked with Adam in the garden; when He partook with Abraham of the calf which he had dressed; when He had talked with Moses as a man talketh with his friend; but every Israelite would have felt, as we should do, the incongruity of transferring these ancient representations to the times of David or one of the kings. Men look back upon Paradise or to some golden age as to a time in which, as they believe, there was a nearer approach to God:

> Upon the breast of new-created Earth
> Man walked, and angels to his sight appeared,
> Crowning the glorious hills of Paradise.

But they forget that the nearer vision of God is also the narrower, and that to comprehend the whole of the visible world they must ascend to the invisible. The Israelitish prophets seem also to have been aware that many things said by them of old times respecting the nature or acts of the Divine Being stood in need of correction. Thus, while in the histories the bloody and perfidious destruction of the house of Ahab and of the prophets of Baal by Jehu is attributed to his zeal for God, who had anointed him by the hand of His prophet, there was not wanting a prophet, Hosea, in the next generation, who foretold that the Lord would 'avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu.' Thus again, while we are taught in the second commandment that 'God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children,' the prophet Ezekiel, apparently alluding to these words, declares with authority that henceforward there shall be no more this proverb in the house of Israel, 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set upon edge,' but every soul shall bear his own iniquity. Thus the arbitrary is exchanged for the moral, even in spite of the appearances of the surrounding world. And everywhere the beneficent aspect of the divine nature is exhibited to us as well as the terrible which had absorbed the minds of the people in earlier ages: the religion of love is combined with that of fear. The terrible Jehovah, who is ready to pour out the vials of His wrath on the backsliding race, is also the

God who 'loves them freely,' and draws them to Him 'with bonds of love.'

And here I will notice a difficulty in these inquiries which has, perhaps, already occurred to you—it is a difficulty which often applies to similar inquiries. When we speak of the Old Testament we include a number of writings of the most various dates, and the dates of most of them are not exactly known to us. The history of Israel extends over a period of a thousand or fifteen hundred years. During this period the nation is sometimes in the closest connexion with the Assyrian or Egyptian or Persian or late Greek Empire, at other times almost isolated from them. It is natural to ask how we can be sure to what period the Jewish conception of the divine nature can be really attributed, and how far they may have been affected by the ideas of foreign nations. Are the Books of Genesis or Exodus, or the oldest part of them, really of the same date with the Book of Deuteronomy, which has so much in common with the prophets? Is the minute detail of the Ceremonial Law really prior to the denunciations of ceremonialism which we read in the words of Micah and Isaiah? Why do the names of Adam and Eve never occur except in the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis? Is the prediction of Cyrus, or the consolation of Israel in the captivity, a foretelling of events by the prophet Isaiah which were to happen two centuries afterwards, or the expression of religious feeling

by a great unknown prophet who lived at some later epoch?

The time will no doubt arrive when these and the like questions, which have been often angrily discussed, will be regarded as perfectly unconnected with the interests of religion and theology, as having, in fact, no more to do with them than similar questions raised about the genuineness or authenticity of the Greek or Latin classics. But they will always be of importance in the study of Jewish history and literature. Unless we can form an idea of the chronology we can obtain no adequate conception of the progress of religious ideas among the Jewish people—we shall be in danger of mixing up notions which are really incongruous. In this, as in most inquiries relating to antiquity, we can have no certainty about details or *minutiae*—we cannot determine accurately whether a particular verse is to be assigned to an earlier or later prophet. But we may still be able to say confidently, that all the prophets of a particular age have a common character and teach a common lesson.

Now the prophets of the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ have such a common character; in them the spiritual nature of religion is fully taught and developed. The same spiritual lesson is repeated to us in the Psalms and in the Book of Deuteronomy. The dates of the Psalms vary, and for the most part to writings so short no chronological criterion can be applied. The Book of Deuteronomy has been

thought by recent critics, chiefly on grounds of internal evidence, to have been written in the reign of King Josiah. Here, then, we have a large portion of the Old Testament Scriptures, for the most part contemporary or nearly so, to which we may appeal as the source of our knowledge respecting the religion of the Israelites in the golden age of prophecy, when the outward fortunes of the Jewish people were beginning to wane and disappear, and a greater and more abiding glory to shine forth.

There is yet another confusion which besets the study of the Israelitish religion—the erroneous opposition between the Old Testament and the New. They have differences no doubt, great and important, but differences are often made between them which have no real existence. When God is said to be represented in the one as the God of justice, in the other as the God of love; when the Old Testament is opposed to the New as the law to the Gospel, the thunder of Mount Sinai to the meekness and gentleness of Christ; this is really a very inconsiderate and partial way of viewing the subject. For in the Old and New Testaments alike God is equally represented to us as a Father as well as a King, as a God of love and mercy as well as of justice; in both He is the God of individuals as well as of nations, who is not far 'from every one of us.' The truer distinction, perhaps the only distinction, which can be consistently maintained between them is that in the Old Testa-

ment God is revealed to His people Israel, and through them to the world, by the word of Moses, Isaiah, and the prophets; that in the New Testament He has spoken not to one nation only, but to the whole world by His Son Jesus Christ.

And now we may leave these preliminaries and return to the general subject. First among the conceptions of God which we find in the Old Testament is that 'He is the God of nature.' The Israelites of course knew nothing of the fixed laws by which the world is governed; their heaven was above them, their place of the departed below; the earth was a large plain which divided them. The stars were the hosts of whom Jehovah was the Lord. Just behind the visible universe He dwelt, sometimes revealing Himself for a moment to the eye of the prophet 'sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up,' or 'having the body of heaven in His clearness.' His power is shown both in the ordinary working of nature and in the extraordinary. He makes the field barren or fruitful; He gives or withholds from Israel corn, wine and oil, the silver also and the gold and the wool and the flax with which they adorn themselves are His gifts. For their sakes He makes a covenant with the wild beasts, for whom He also provides. He hath set the round world so fast that it cannot be moved (this is the manner in which the Israelitish prophet expresses that confidence which to us is given by what we term the uniformity of the

laws of nature). The good and evil which come to men, the storm, the drought, the pestilence, equally with the beneficial rain or the fertilizing sunshine, are regulated by His pleasure. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy work.' This is the picture of the world in repose. But not less is His presence seen in the earthquake and the storm, when, as we read in the 18th Psalm, 'the earth trembled and quaked, and the very foundations of the hills shook and were removed, because He was wroth.' 'He bowed the heavens also, and came down, and it was dark under His feet.' Or, as the two aspects are combined in the 50th Psalm, 'Out of Sion hath God appeared in perfect beauty': and yet 'there shall go before Him a consuming fire, and a mighty tempest shall be stirred up round about Him.'

Yet this physical government of the world is also a moral government, in which God distributes rewards and punishments to His people. He is not only their Creator, but their Judge, who gives to every man according to his works. True, the prophet or psalmist sometimes finds that the mystery of the world is too hard for him, as it has been for many a one in every age, when he sees the wicked in such prosperity and flourishing like a green bay-tree; or when, like Job, he contrasts the consciousness of his own rectitude with the misery of his outward circumstances; or when, like the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, after surveying the world, he acknow-

ledges that all is vanity, and that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked, yet still maintains, in spite of all this, that 'to fear God and keep His commandments is the conclusion of the whole matter.' Even to the psalmist the ways of God were not cleared up 'until he went into the sanctuary and considered the end of these men.' He, too, reflected with gratitude that he had 'never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.' Such were the partial answers, which in those ancient times men were able to give to the common difficulties which beset us and them in relation to the divine government of the universe. But chiefly they looked forward to another kingdom which never was, and never was to be, in which the will of God was to be more perfectly fulfilled, and 'the sun of righteousness' was to shine forth, and 'the mountain of the Lord's House was to be exalted in the top of the mountains.' Before this there is to be a day of judgement, 'a day of the Lord,' in which He will punish the sins of Israel, and from the remnant make a new people. They shall return from all the nations whither He has scattered them; Ephraim shall not envy Jacob, nor Judah vex Ephraim. Israel shall be a third with Assyria and Egypt, while in Micah and Isaiah the vision extends (for he words occur in both of them): 'And many people shall go and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will

walk in His paths. For out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'

When we speak of Jehovah being revealed to men in the Old Testament as the moral governor of the world, we must remember, however, one important limitation which narrows this conception. Though He is the God of the whole earth, 'who sits upon the circle of the heavens,' before whom the nations are as nothing compared with His greatness, yet He is also in a special manner the God of the Jewish people. With them He is in direct relation as their King and Judge, as their Father and Friend. But the other nations of the world come within the circle of His Providence chiefly in so far as their fortunes affect the Jewish race; they are on the outskirts of His government, and the furthest vision of the prophet hardly pierces to a time when there shall be one religion spread over the whole earth. No ancient nation ever thought of other nations as equally with themselves the objects of a divine care. It would have been hard, almost impossible, for them to have done so. Nay, my brethren, is it not hard for us as well as them to realize what we most certainly believe, or at least declare that we believe, that every other human being, the poorest, the weakest, those who dwell in distant climes, or who lived in past ages, are as much the object of a divine solicitude as we ourselves are? The national religions of the world came first; and the Jewish religion follows the same order:

they were schoolmasters, as we may say, a little parodying the words of St. Paul, to bring men to the universal religion. The later religions of the world, whether Christianity or Buddhism or Mahometanism, have all claimed to be universal, limited to no favoured race or tribes, however imperfectly the disciples of all of them have ever been able to carry out this divine inspiration.

It is out of this relation of Jehovah to the Jewish people that the tender human relation of God to man was developed by the prophets. They spoke of the power which nothing could resist, of the justice which no man could escape; they were never weary of describing in material imagery the control which was exercised by Him over the works of nature. Yet this same mighty God is the gentlest and most loving of rulers; the Father and the Friend, the Consoler and Redeemer, even more than the Conqueror and King. His love as far exceeds human love as His strength exceeds human strength. He is the Shepherd who feeds His flock and gathers the lambs in His arms; He is the Spouse of Israel as well as her Lord, whom she is constantly deserting, and who is always ready to receive her again. There is no movement towards repentance or cry for mercy that does not at once enter into His ears. The prisoner and the oppressed, all those who in early and disturbed states of society are least regarded, are the special objects of His care; He is the Father of the fatherless, and in Him they find

mercy. 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' It is a hasty remark which has been sometimes made, that in the Old Testament mankind are only regarded as the servants of God, but in the New Testament are His sons. For both in the Old and in the New Testaments alike He is their Father as well as their God. But instead of summarizing further the representation of this aspect of the divine character which is given in the prophets, I would ask you to consider the deep tenderness and feeling of two passages in their writings.

The first is from the later chapters of Isaiah (lxiii. 15, 16, 19), probably written during the captivity, which combines in a wonderful manner the two characteristics of gentleness and sublimity.

'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory: where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels and of Thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

'Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting.'

Where we may notice, by the way, how the prophet identifies himself with the Jewish people so as to be almost indistinguishable from them.

And again renewing the plea :—

'We are Thine: Thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by Thy name.'

The other passage is of a much earlier date, and is taken from the prophet Hosea, who lived in the days of Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah (Hosea xi. 1, 3, 4). It presents God to us, not only as the father or spouse, but almost as the mother of His people.

'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.'

'I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.'

And again (xiv. 4):

'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from them.'

In some old-fashioned, may I say wrong-headed, treatises of theology, such as Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses*, the God of Israel is described to us as a sort of king or magistrate who keeps His people in order by rewards and punishments. And there have not been wanting writers in our own days who think that this, whether true or not, is about as high a notion as we can form of the divine nature. This is the old fallacy of might prevailing over right, the theory of the strong man as it is sometimes called, transferred from the sphere of human things to the divine. How unlike this is either to the love of God on which the prophets delighted to dwell, or to the power of God which is ever on the side of righteousness, I need not stop to consider.

Thus far we have been contemplating the divine

nature either in relation to the outward world or to the Jewish world. There remains the highest and greatest question of all, so far as it can be separated from these. What is He in His own innermost being, when separated from the accidents of time and place? How shall we describe that God who existed before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were formed?

There is one word hardly translatable into other languages, because the Israelitish prophets have themselves infused into it a depth of meaning, under which all the attributes of God are comprehended. This is 'holiness'; and God is called by them 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy.' It is difficult for us to comprehend the whole signification of this word. It means moral goodness, it means righteousness, it means truth, it means purity —but it means more than these. It means the spirit which is altogether above the world, and yet has an affinity with goodness and truth in the world. It implies separation as well as elevation, dignity as well as innocence. It is the personification of the idea of good. It is the light of which the whole earth is full, which is also the fire which burns up the ungodly. It has a side of awe as well as of goodness. It suggests the thought, not of direct punishment or suffering to be inflicted on the wicked, but rather, 'How can we sinners venture into the presence of a holy God? What unclean person can behold

His face and live?' Like other ideas of perfection it may be called, in the language of philosophy, transcendental, that is to say, not wholly capable of being expressed in human language. After we have combined all the aspects of truth or goodness in one, there remains something more which is above us, which we can feel rather than describe.

But what is necessarily indistinct to us when we endeavour to carry our thoughts beyond this world becomes clearer to us when we return to earth and think, not of God, but of man. The holiness of God is that image of Himself which He seeks to implant in all His creatures. 'Be ye holy even as I am holy,' are words in which the whole of religion may be summed up. And though we are not able to look at the sun in his strength, we may yet see him through a glass darkly or in human reflections of him. Thus, for example, if we were to attempt to define or describe the meaning of the term once more with reference to man, we should find that there were very few to whom we could venture to apply it. It means in the first place perfect disinterestedness, indifference to earthly and human interests. Again, it implies a mind one with God, over which no shadow of uncleanness or untruth ever passes, which seeks only to know His will, and knowing it, to carry it out in the world. To purity and truth it adds peace and a certain dignity derived from independence of all things. It is heaven upon earth—to live

loving all men, disturbed by nothing, fearing nothing. It is a temper of mind which is unshaken by changes of religious opinion, which is not dependent upon outward observances of religion. Such a character we may meet with once or twice in a long life, and derive a sort of inspiration from it. And oh! that it were possible that some of us might, even in the days of our youth, find the blessedness of leading such a life in the light of God's presence always.

The aim of the prophets is almost wholly a moral one, and the demands which they make in the name of Jehovah over the people of Israel are moral demands. 'Wash you, make you clean.' 'Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgement, do justice to the fatherless, defend the cause of the widow.' Nothing can be simpler than their religious teaching. This simplicity leads them to denounce, not only the sins, but the religious observances of the Israelites. Read carefully the first chapter of Isaiah: 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; your new moons and sabbaths and your appointed feasts My soul hateth'; and you see how far they were from blindly conforming to the religion of their time. Do we suppose that any one who spoke in the same spirit to us would be received with favour amongst us? They came not to increase the outward splendour of the temple or the synagogue, but to teach a lesson which should abide for ever. That lesson may be summed up in the words of Micah,

called by Bishop Butler, himself a great teacher of the morality of religion, the justest description of religious life that has ever been given. 'He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

And this lesson they have bequeathed to us, the simplest of all religious lessons and also the most in danger of being lost; of this they have found for us the expression in words which will never pass away. We do not rashly apply their denunciations to the religious observances of our own day; but they teach us that by being above them only can we have the right use of them. Their mission was to stand apart from their fellow-men, ours to act in concert and communion with them. There is another lesson which may be gathered from their writings, to which also ecclesiastical history bears witness. It is this, that, whereas the permanence of societies and churches is derived from system and organization and authority, their true life flows from individuals acting and thinking freely—from prophets, not from priests; from those who have resisted the popular tide, not from those who are borne along with it.

I promised, at the commencement of this sermon, to make some brief comparison of the Israelitish religion with the Greek religion, and also with our modern Christianity. I shall confine the comparison to two striking points.

(1) When we place side by side the writings of Plato or Epictetus and one of the Jewish prophets, we are struck by the fact that while they both equally insist on the morality or perfection of the divine nature, to the Greek it is comparatively indifferent whether he speaks of God in the singular or in the plural, in the masculine or neuter; whereas the Hebrew teacher begins by proclaiming, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God,' and at every turn attributes to Him the acts and feelings of a person. This difference between the two modes of conception leads us to make the reflection that, while we know of no higher mode of representing the Divine Being to ourselves than under the forms of Unity and Personality, yet that Personality is not like a human personality, nor that Unity like the unity of the world. It seems as if we should not be so careful to define our terms as to vary them, lest we should become the slaves of words in matters which transcend words.

(2) When we compare the prophet's consciousness of the Divine Being with our own colder and more distant conception of Him, we seem almost to be of a different religion from him. Perhaps we hardly allow sufficiently for the difference which is necessarily made in our ideas of God by the progress of human knowledge. The Israelite, as I was remarking at the beginning of this sermon, had no conception of laws of nature. He thought of God as very near to him, —his Father, his King, the Inhabitant, when He was

pleased to dwell there, of the land of Israel. But any notion of a Divine Being which did not embrace all knowledge and all power would be to us unreal. We cannot be satisfied with having one God in science and history, another in religion. And the reconcilement of these opposite aspects of the divine nature has hitherto been beyond our strength. Something we may have done for it, but not much. And, while men are seeking after God, if haply they may find Him (though He be not far from any one of us), we cannot entirely cast out fear and doubt; we have sometimes to turn our eyes back again to earth and think of our duties there, which remain as ever plain and clear to us. Some of us may find a parallel to our state in the language of Job and Ecclesiastes.

I have been treating in this sermon of a very solemn subject in the language of criticism.

In these days there are many things which we must criticize, although they are the foundation of our lives, for otherwise they would become mere words, and have no meaning to us. We cannot expect that without any effort of thought we can understand the thoughts of 2,500 years ago. The realities which underlie our criticism, though manifested in different forms, remain the same; though the world grows old they change not; though at times obscured they are again revealed, deriving, as in past so also in future ages, light and meaning from the history and experience of mankind.

V

CHRIST'S REVELATION OF GOD[1].

GOD, WHO AT SUNDRY TIMES AND IN DIVERS MANNERS SPAKE IN TIMES PAST UNTO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS, HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON. HEBREWS i. 1, 2.

IN preceding sermons we traced the idea of God in the Greek and Eastern religions and in the Hebrew prophets. We saw how slowly mankind emerged out of local worship and barbarous fancies, and came at length to a higher notion of the divine nature; how they passed from the Homeric gods to the absolute being and good of Aristotle and Plato; from the childlike innocent vision of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day to the God of justice and mercy 'terrible in righteousness, mighty to save,' of the prophets and the Psalms. We have now to consider the further revelation of God in the New Testament, which may be summed up almost in a word: 'The manifestation of God in Jesus Christ.'

As I was saying in a former sermon, the relation of the Old Testament to the New has been often misunderstood. The New Testament has been read

[1] Preached at Balliol, May 21, 1876.

backwards in the Old: an ancient ceremony, a holy place, a number, a word, has been made the symbol of a hidden truth. The old is always entwining with the new both in philosophy and theology, and out of this accidental connexion has been developed a system of interpreting the Old Testament by the New. The practice has had in two ways a bad result. It has fixed the mind upon what is unimportant in the Old and New Testament Scriptures rather than upon what is important; and it has tended, if I may use the expression, to confine the Gospel within the curtain of the Tabernacle. This is one of those theological questions upon which the comparison of other religions has thrown a flood of light. What theologians of the last century would have supposed to be a proof of the divine origin of Christianity, viz. the adaptation of the older form of a religion to its later requirements ('which things are an allegory,' as is said in the Epistle to the Galatians), is now seen to be a phenomenon not peculiar to Christianity, but common to all religions in which there are sacred books, if they retain any life or power.

Yet there is also a real harmony between the Old Testament and the New, which will more clearly appear to us when we drop the accidents of time and place and pierce to the thing contained in them. There was no necessary connexion between the Paschal lamb and that other sacrifice which was the negation of a sacrifice; but the Paschal lamb was

a natural image under which the disciples, who were Jews at first, spoke of the sufferings of Christ. To us it is a mere figure of speech, consecrated by the tradition of ages. But there is also a deeper harmony between the Old Testament and the New, which is the harmony of good and truth everywhere: when the prophet Isaiah says, 'Your new moons and sabbaths are an abomination unto me,' he breathes the same spirit as St. Paul, where he insists that no man shall judge another 'in meat or in drink, in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath day.' When again, almost in a strain of passion, he says, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool, if ye be willing and obedient,' he anticipates the milder and more authoritative words of Christ, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee; go, and sin no more.' When Isaiah says (xix. 24), 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land,' in this singular form of words he expresses the same thought which is uttered by Christ: 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, that there may be one fold and one shepherd.' The evangelical prophet and the New Testament, with a greater or less degree of clearness, teach the same lesson, that there is one God and Father of all, and one Church or Israel of God. Alike they denounce evil, especially in the form of hypocrisy; the prophets not sparing the

kings or priests who were their contemporaries, while Christ, in a severer tone than He uses towards other sinners, condemns Pharisaism, which had become more systematized now that the world had grown older and the religion of Israel had been longer established. Such a common basis there is in the Old and New Testaments, and perhaps in the higher parts of almost all religions.

And not only is there this unconscious harmony between them, but Christ expressly derives a great part of His doctrine from the laws of the prophets. In His own mind His teaching seems to have appeared generally to be a fulfilment of them; though one or two isolated passages may be cited, such as that remarkable one in St. John, 'All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers,' which have an opposite character. It may be observed that, though He nowhere speaks of the Ceremonial Law as having any relation to Himself, He selects passages both from the Books of Moses and the prophets, and makes them the text of His discourses. 'This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.' To those who condemn His healing on the Sabbath day He rejoins, 'Go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice'; and He quotes examples of what to the Jews would have appeared the profanation of it, in the Old Testament. To others who made the word of God of none effect by their traditions, He replies, 'Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of

you, saying: 'This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoureth Me with their lips; but in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' Or again, speaking of the blindness of the whole people: 'By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and not perceive.' There is no more gracious description of the Gospel than that which Christ Himself read in the synagogue out of the Book of the prophet Esaias: 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'

So again, probably in His own thoughts, and certainly in the earliest reflections of His disciples, Christ is identified with the suffering servant of God in the prophecies of the late Isaiah—suffering and also rejoicing; for in the Old as well as in the New Testament there is a picture of a suffering as well as of a triumphant Messiah. Every saviour or helper of mankind has a time of suffering as well as of glory, a time in which God seems to have forsaken him, and the meanness or the indifference or the wickedness of mankind are too much for him, and a time when the multitude cry 'Hosanna' before him, or he himself in his own inmost soul has a more present vision

of a kingdom not of this world. This double thread runs alike through the prophets and the Gospels. Only what is more outward and visible in the Old Testament becomes more inward and spiritual in the New. The kingdom of God is not the conversion of surrounding nations or the subjugation of them to the God of Israel, but 'the kingdom of God is within you.' There, in the heart of man, its struggle is to be maintained, its victory won. It does not seek to incorporate the kingdoms of the world, but is rather in antagonism with them. The faithful believer feels the dead weight of sin and of the world, but in himself and in relation to God he is free and lord of all things. Take as the highest expression of what I am saying the remarkable words of St. Paul in 2 Cor. vi: 'As deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.' Or again the description of the spiritual conflict in Rom. vii: 'The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . O wretched man that I am. . . . I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Of this spiritual conflict there is no trace in the prophets. Neither do they ever speak of God taking up His abode in the hearts of men. Their relation to Him is an external one like that of subjects to a king. They see Him sitting on a throne high and lifted up. They cannot be said to reconcile God to man, or to

bridge the chasm which separates them. He is the Sun of their life, and they seem to fear that when their breath passes away the sunshine in which they have lived may be withdrawn from them. They utter His commands; occasionally, awake or in a dream, they hear His voice; but they do not hold communion with Him. He is clothed in the greatness of nature, which like the cherubim veils His face from them. He is still the God of the Jewish race, though in the distance the prophet sees that other races will begin, or are beginning, to partake of the mercies granted to the Israelites. The misery and evil of the people are present; and they are already experiencing the just judgements of God. But the hope of good is future—in *those* days, in the *latter* days, at some unknown and distant time; whereas in the New Testament the good is present and immediate; within the reach of every one, if he will renounce himself and follow Christ. For these *are* 'the latter days,' and 'this day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'

The life of Christ comes after the promises and denunciations of the prophets like the calm after storm, like the still small voice in the Book of Kings after the thunder and the earthquake. It is the life of a private man, unknown to the history of His own time. Very few Romans within a century of His birth had ever heard of His name. To a stranger visiting Palestine about the year 30 He would have appeared the gentlest and most innocent of mankind.

Such a one might have been described in the words of the prophet: 'He shall not strive nor cry; a bruised reed shall He not break, nor quench the smoking flax.' He would have seemed like any other man, only calmer and deeper. He would not have made that great interval between Himself and other men which we sometimes attribute to Him; He would rather have sought to identify Himself with them. 'Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is God.' What, then, do we mean, and what would He Himself have meant by declaring that He was the 'manifestation of God' or the 'Son of God'?

Suppose that we pause for a moment and ask, first of all, what we mean by the very term 'the manifestation of God.'

Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; how, then, can He be manifested to us? He is in one world and we in another: how can we pass from ourselves to Him? We cannot escape from the condition of our own minds. He is in eternity, and we are limited by space and time: what conception or idea can we form of Him? Everything that we think is subject to the laws of our minds: every word that we utter is a part of a human language. But our thoughts are not the thoughts of the universal mind, and language, as we know, is full of defects and imperfections. Are we not, then, seeking to think what cannot be conceived and to express what no words can utter?

So both in ancient and modern times the philosopher has widened the breach between the seen and the unseen, between the human and divine. But the second thoughts of philosophy have always been that from this transcendentalism we must return to the earth, which is the habitation, not of our bodies only, but of our minds, and that through man we must ascend to God. We do not suppose God to be in a form like ourselves ; nor are the most wonderful works of art, except so far as they convey a moral idea, in any sensible degree a nearer approximation to the image of God than the rudest. But still He is only known to us, so far as we can conceive Him, under the form of a perfect human nature. The highest which we can imagine in man is not human but divine. Perfect righteousness, perfect holiness, perfect truth, perfect love—these are the elements or attributes, not of a human, but of a divine being.

There are some persons who believe only in what they see, and God they cannot see ; there are some persons who accept only what is definite, and God cannot be defined ; there are some persons upon whose minds an impression is only produced by poetry or painting, and the greatest art of Italian or any other poet or painter cannot depict or describe God. There are another class again who would reject any God whose existence cannot be demonstrated to them on the principles of inductive science. To all these, righteousness, holiness, truth, love, instead of

being attributes of God and the most real of all powers in the world, are fancies of mystics, or abstractions of philosophers.

I know that the record in which this divine goodness is presented to us is fragmentary, and that we cannot altogether separate the thoughts of Christ Himself from the impressions which the disciples and evangelists formed of Him. But is this any reason for our not attempting to frame an idea of God, the highest and holiest which we can? If there be anything in the narrative of the Gospels that is discordant or inconsistent, either with itself or other truths not known in that age of the world, that is not to be insisted upon as a part of our religion. Our duty as Christians is not to inquire whether this or that word of Christ has been preserved with superhuman accuracy, but to seek to form the highest idea of God which we can, and to implant it in our minds and in our lives.

What, then, is this exemplar which God gives us of His love and of Himself, first manifested in the life of Christ, and then fashioned anew in our own hearts? We may begin by regarding it as the opposite of the world. 'Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' It is not the image of power, or of external greatness, or of any quality which men ordinarily admire; there is no admixture of the beauty which strikes the sense in it. For 'His face was marred more than the sons of man.' Nor is it

the embodiment of genius or intellect, though these may be mighty instruments in the government of the world. Nor is it the image of a great conqueror who subjugates the nations to a kingdom of righteousness. For such a subjugation by external force to good is not possible: 'the kingdom of God is within you.' The victory of good over evil had sometimes floated before the mind of the Israelitish prophets as a victory of arms. 'But My kingdom,' says Christ, 'is not of this world; else would My servants fight for it, but now is My kingdom not from hence.' In none of these forms has God revealed Himself to us.

Nor again does the image of Christ lead us to conceive of pleasure, or of what we term happiness, as specially appropriate to the Divine Being. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' is the true conception of the divine nature. In this world we sometimes make too much of happiness when compared with noble energy and the struggle to fulfil a great purpose. It seems to be true also to say that God wishes for the good rather than for the happiness of His creatures, as far as these two are separable. He who would be the follower of Christ cannot promise himself a life of innocent recreation or enjoyment: he has a cross to bear which may be the opposition or persecution of his fellow-men, which may be only his own weakness in the fulfilment of his task. He cannot please himself from day to day; he must be about his Master's business, he must take a part with

God in His government of the world. For, as far as the will of God is fulfilled on earth, it is through the co-operation of man: 'We are workers together with Him.' This is the greatest to which man can attain. And every man who works in the true spirit feels instinctively that he must observe the laws which God has laid down for his guidance, whether those higher laws of which revelation and conscience speak to us or those which are gained from experience and observation.

In this expression, 'Not of the world,' the character of Christ may be summed up. He does not share the prejudices of the world: He is not influenced by the traditions or opinions of men. He is living among a people enslaved by ceremonies and ordinances, the lower classes liable to outbursts of fanatical fury, the upper seeming to care for little else but the maintenance of social order. He goes on His way immovable, amid the rage of the zealot, the cynicism of the Sadducees, the ceremonialism of the Pharisees, with His mind fixed only on the requirements of the divine law. He begins again with the word of God apart from all the additions and perversions which had overgrown it. He brings men back to a few simple truths, which He would carry out in thought as well as in act. He converts the law into a spirit of life. The classes of men whom He delights to bless are not those whom the world admires, the rich, the powerful, the intellectual; but blessed are the poor,

or the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers. These are the types of character which are blessed in the sight of God. The collection of sayings which we call the Sermon on the Mount are for the most part a correction of the ordinary religion. 'If thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth;' 'Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber and shut the door;' 'Love not thy neighbour only, but thine enemy'—adding the reason, that 'ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust.' So far is Christ from revealing God to us as a God of vengeance. He does not mean to say that good and evil are indifferent to God, but that the good and evil alike are treated by Him with equity, with consideration, with love. It is the spirit in which He Himself says, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

Another general form under which we may present to ourselves the life of Christ is that 'He went about doing good.' Men are for the most part content with themselves if they abstain from evil and do a little good in the world. They never consider, or hardly ever, how their whole lives might be given up to the service of God and their fellow creatures. They are the creatures of habit and repute; they do not

depart from the customary ways of society. Nor can we deny that most of us would be unequal to this greater life, nor set any limit to the good which may be done by those who sit still in the house, who scarcely ever leave the seclusion of their own village or home. But let us not be ignorant also that there is a higher and nobler ideal than this—the ideal of a life which is passed in doing good to man; in seeking to alleviate the miseries and inequalities of his lot, to raise him out of the moral and physical degradation in which he is sunk, and to implant in him a higher sense of truth and right. What would have become of the world if there had been no such teachers or saviours of mankind? For the lower are inspired by the higher, and most of all by the highest of all. This is what makes the life of Christ such a precious possession to the world, not merely the good that He did when on earth, in teaching and consoling the afflicted, but the example which He left behind for all time of another and higher sort of character such as had never existed before in this world. To live for others only, and only in the service of God, to be the mediator between God and man, to reconcile the world to itself—this is the idea which Christ is always setting before us, and of which those who are His disciples must in their measure seek to partake.

One other type under which we may imagine the character of Christ is that 'He lived in God.' He did not teach of Himself or act of Himself, but He was

taught and inspired of God. His own soul was the mirror or reflection of the divine will. He looked inwards (not like the mystic seeking to be absorbed in some unreal enthusiasm); and, finding within Himself love and right and truth without any alloy of earthly motive, felt instinctively that they were the word of God. 'This man had no letters,' said the Jews; but He saw farther and more truly than them all. 'Is not this the carpenter's Son?' Yet He spoke with a divine authority. For He spoke not of Himself, but out of a Power which was independent of Himself, words which He knew to be the voice of God and the true law of the world. The truth never presented itself to Him as a matter of opinion or uncertainty or speculation; it was not a thing to be reasoned or argued about, but to be felt and known by all men. It meant, not a system of doctrines such as the Christian community afterwards devised, but a spirit of life—the spirit of peace and love, the temper of mind which rests in God and is resigned to His will, which seeks also to fulfil His will actively in doing good to man.

To this simple life Christ invites us; to return to the beginning of Christianity, now that the world has got so far onward in its course. He speaks to us across the ages still, telling us to come back to the first principles of religion. And of this simple religion we have the assurance in ourselves, and the better we become the more assured we are of it.

Who can doubt that love is better than hatred, truth than falsehood, righteousness than unrighteousness, holiness than impurity? Whatever uncertainty there may be about the early history of Christianity, there is no uncertainty about the Christian life. Questions of criticism have been raised concerning the Gospels; there have been disputes about rites and ceremonies; whole systems of theology have passed away: but that which truly constitutes religion, that in which good men are like one another, that in which they chiefly resemble Christ, remains the same. And it may be regarded as one of the great blessings of the age in which we live that, after so many wanderings out of the way, we are at length beginning to distinguish the essential from the accidental, and to appreciate more than any former age the true meaning of the words of Christ.

And now some one will ask how the life of Christ, which has been thus imperfectly treated, is a revelation of the divine nature. I told you before that it was only through the human we could approach the divine. The highest and best that we can conceive, whether revealed to us in the person of Christ or in any other, *that* is God. Because this is relative to our minds, and therefore necessarily imperfect, we must not cast it away from us, or seek for some other unknown truth which can be described only by negatives. To such a temper the words of the prophet may be applied: 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall

ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? But the word is very nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.' Every good thought in our own mind, every good man whom we meet, or of whom we read in former ages, every great word or action, is a witness to us of the nature of God.

And, yet once more, a person may ask, 'Do science and philosophy teach us nothing about the divine nature? Must not our knowledge of God increase as our knowledge of the world increases? Must not reflection add something to the meaning of the words of Christ? Must not they be read in the light of experience?' We all of us know, for example, that the world is governed by fixed laws, and the possibility of our doing any good to our fellow creatures depends on our acquaintance with them. Yet there is no word of this either in the Scriptures of the Old or New Testaments, but only such a general confidence in the uniformity of nature as is expressed in the words 'He hath set the round world so fast that it cannot be moved'; or, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' We cannot, therefore, venture to say that nothing is added to our knowledge of God by increasing experience, or that He does not speak to us in history and in nature as well as in Scripture.

Into this subject I propose to enter more at large on some future occasion. For the present let me

entreat you not to suppose, because you hear sacred things discussed and analysed and spoken of perhaps in a different way from what would have been common thirty years ago, that they are less sacred and authoritative than they once seemed to be. We can no more live without religion now than formerly; it is always returning upon us; we cannot cast it off without weakening and impoverishing the character. We need the support of it in life, the comfort of it in death. There is no other principle by which a man can be raised above himself into a higher level of thought and action. As little can we give up truth without inflicting a wound on our own higher nature. To show how these two may be reconciled in education and in practical life; how the most fervent love of truth may be consistent with the deepest religious feeling; how the spirit of Christ may animate historical and scientific researches without being lost in them—this is a task which seems to be reserved for the coming generation to accomplish.

VI

THE SUBJECTION OF THE SON[1].

THEN SHALL THE SON ALSO HIMSELF BE SUBJECT UNTO HIM THAT PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.

1 Cor. xv. 28.

It is possible for the student of theology to observe through many cycles of human history the growth and development of the idea of God in the heart and conscience of man, passing from the worship of many gods to that of One, with whom mankind are brought into nearer and nearer relation, and of whom they seem gradually to acquire a truer notion. First among the successive stages he would note the rudimentary idea of God which existed among primitive nations, and which still exists in barbarous countries; the vague terror of stocks and stones, the shrinking of men from their own shadows, ascending gradually to a worship of the nobler forms of nature. Secondly, he would trace the idea of God as it grew up to larger proportions in the great eastern religions, and began to be interpenetrated and absorbed by moral elements in the Jewish prophets, not yet disengaged from nature, but struggling to be free from it. Thirdly, as

[1] Preached at Balliol in 186.

it developed in the light and life of the Greek world, attaining to a superficial harmony in the Greek poets and artists. Lastly, he would reach the revelation of God in Jesus Christ which is contained in the Gospel.

And now the question arises, Is any further enlargement of the idea of God possible? Can we ever expect to know more of Him than we find in the Old and New Testament? Christ has spoken of Him to us as 'His Father and our Father, as His God and our God.' Nor was such a relation of God and His people altogether unknown to the prophets. 'Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not.' Do we want to know more than is implied by these or the like 'comfortable words'? Or do we suppose that the feeble brain of man can search into the nature of the Most High? Can anything more be required of us than that we should bring the message of Christ home to our own hearts and lives?

This is a mode of speaking which naturally commends itself to our religious feelings. We are apt to think that we cannot have too much of a good thing in religion, too much reverence, too much humility, too much devotion. We forget how easily these may degenerate into ignorance and superstition, how nearly allied they are to them. We do not remark, when we oppose the words of God to the words of man, that still the word of God is of human interpretation, necessarily changing with the advance of litera-

ture and criticism; or that, when we call upon reason to bow before revelation, through reason only revelation can be apprehended by us; for, however we may strive to be more or less than ourselves, we cannot get rid of our own minds. There is the same difficulty in distinguishing between the movements of our minds towards good and the Spirit of God working in us. Who can say where one begins and the other ends? In like manner we may draw lines of demarcation about the Bible which may distinguish it from all other books, or about theology which may separate it from philosophy and secular knowledge; and such distinctions may help us to define our ideas. But we shall soon find them to be unreal. We cannot separate the secular from the religious any more than the human from the divine or God from nature.

Therefore we do not venture to isolate our knowledge of God: we cannot say that there is no truth which is not contained in the Bible, as the Caliph Omar said that all which is not contained in the Koran is either false or superfluous. More than eighteen centuries have passed away since Christ appeared upon the earth. Have they taught mankind nothing about the government of God and His manner of dealing with His creatures? Is there no religious experience to be gathered from history, analogous to that which individuals derive from observation of their own lives? Is there no ever-growing witness of God in nature, but only a vague sense that He is the

Creator of all things? Within the last two centuries new sciences have come into existence which have changed the aspect of the world. Can they have left our religious life wholly untouched? The writers of the New Testament were hardly acquainted with any religion but the Jewish; nor did they wholly lay aside the prevalent traditions or opinions of the age in which they lived. But we have learned to compare one religion with another; we see how many truths are common to them all, truths which were once thought to be derived solely from revelation; how many tendencies to error, from which the Christian Church has not escaped. Again, the genuineness of sacred writings is tried by a different method from that of a century ago; and, as criticism advances, as our knowledge of physical science extends, the lines of defence which we draw around Christianity are different and wider. One by one its artificial supports seem to disappear, and it stands before us having no other witness but its own inherent excellence and purity.

It would seem, therefore, that we must go forwards and endeavour to learn what God has taught us in history and nature as well as in Scripture about Himself. There cannot be two truths in the world, but one only; and, if God is everywhere present, and with us in various degrees and ways, every part of truth must throw light upon His nature. I shall not endeavour to combat further the common prejudice that God is

only revealed to us in Scripture, but rather proceed to show what it is which the experience of ages adds to the knowledge of God which we find there. I am not speaking of what God is in His own essence, which neither faith nor philosophy can ever penetrate—if indeed the very words which I have used can be supposed to have any meaning—but only of His manifestation to us. Without attempting to strain our eyes beyond the horizon of human vision, it would seem that our conception of the divine nature is really enlarged, chiefly from three sources.

First, from the comparison of other religions of the world, especially the great religions of the East and the influence of Greek philosophy, which have always been mingling with the stream of Christian truth.

Secondly, from the observation of nature, which extends so much further and penetrates so much deeper than in the ancient world.

Thirdly, from ideas and reasonings which present to us in an abstract and universal form what the Scripture for the most part teaches only by precept and example.

1. The study of the religions of the world throws a flood of light on the true nature of religion. It teaches us in the first place that we must not look backward to a primitive revelation, bu forward to a final one. The aspiration of some great teacher has lifted man above himself; and then for considerable periods of time he has fallen back again into his old state. The truths of religion seem to have been

always in process of being received and being lost. There has always too been a contrast between the principles of men and their practice, between the higher law which the few have imposed upon themselves and the customary religion of the majority of mankind. Yet upon the whole there has been a progress, often interrupted for a thousand years or more; a progress in which we must allow for many steps backward; still there has been a progress from the outward and ceremonial in religion to the inward and spiritual, from ideas of power and fate to ideas of truth and right. If we ask how this progress has been effected, it has been, in the Gentile religions as in Christianity, chiefly by the influence of individual men, who have broken in upon the darkness with new light, who have awakened the dormant elements of truth in the ancient faith, who have given new meanings to old words, who by some method of their own have reconciled the old with the new.

So we are made aware that in their general state and condition other religions are much more like our own than we should have previously supposed. But the parallel does not stop here. For many have had their sacred books, more or less resembling the Jewish or Christian Scriptures. And as time went on they have found the same difficulties in them, and have practised the same methods of interpreting in two or more senses. The Brahmins have had disputes respecting the nature and degree of inspiration which is

to be conceded to the Vedas, whether they are wholly inspired or in the proportion of nine-tenths, or of one-tenth, or perhaps not at all. The Buddhists, again, like ourselves, have their controversy respecting faith and works, similar to that which occurred at the Reformation. And in all, or almost all, religions there seems to be a sense of impurity, sometimes unenlightened, seeking to make atonement by gifts and offerings, sometimes, again, enlightened, and proclaiming like the Jewish prophets that the true atonement or sacrifice was holiness of life. In the religions of the East we may trace almost every movement or tendency which is to be found in Christian Europe. There is Puritanism, Monasticism, Scepticism, Formalism, Mysticism; ancient priestly power and the reaction against it, reformation and counter-reformation, ceremonial bondage too heavy for men's necks to bear; Gnosticism or Pantheism, and Agnosticism or Atheism; only, as the manner of the East is, exaggerated, and sometimes wearing the appearance of a caricature of what we may observe among ourselves. And often we may note among ourselves strange lingering tendencies to Jewish or Gentile fancies or opinions which from time to time revive because they have their origin deep in human nature.

There seem to be two ways in which these and similar facts enlarge our idea of the divine nature.

First, they help us to distinguish the important from the unimportant in religion. We see how many

things there are which mankind have falsely attributed to God. The ceremonies of their own ritual even in minute detail have again and again been supposed to be a revelation from heaven, or they have thought only of the power of God, of His right to do as He liked, and not of the justice which He essentially is. They have attributed to Him the wayward caprice and passions of men, which in Him, because He was a superior being, are consecrated or venial. They have magnified in Him the mixed good and evil of human nature without passing the judgement upon them which they would have passed in the case of their fellow-men. The criticism of a later age has sometimes been that 'such and such acts would have been wrong if they had not been done by the express command of God.' Even in Christianity there have been survivals of this mistaken spirit, which distinguishes between God and truth, or between God and right, instead of viewing them as absolutely identical. And one of the advantages of the study of this comparative theology is that it shows us how much of human error is inseparable from all the earlier notions of a Divine Being; how easily such notions become confirmed by tradition, so that even good men often fall under their power, and can with difficulty be freed from them.

Secondly, we see that the religions of the world are not isolated, but are parts of a whole, forming together the religious education of the human race. God is

not the God and Father of the Jews only, but of all mankind. The heathen, as we sometimes disparagingly call them, are not His enemies but His children, whom, though at a greater distance from Him and by a longer path, He is guiding into His truth. They too hear His voice and are conscious of His presence. To them may be applied the words in which St. Paul speaks, first of the Jew, secondly of the Gentile: 'So then God concluded all under sin that He might have mercy upon all.' And indeed they seem to stand to the future of Christianity in a relation not unlike that of the Jews to the Gospel of Christ. And of them too Christ would have said, as he did of the Gentiles, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' The fatherhood of God, as has been already remarked, is revealed both in the Old Testament and the New. But now it takes a wider scope, extending to all time and all the world. There is realized to us the great family in heaven and earth of which St. Paul speaks. And the principle of religion which might have been once thought to be granted by the favour of heaven to a chosen race, is now seen to be a part of human nature, and inseparable from the mind itself.

These seem to be the principal ways in which our knowledge of God is enlarged by the study of other religions. There is much in our traditional beliefs which is corrected or explained by them; something also is added.

2. And now let us pass on to the second head, 'The witness of God in nature.' Is this merely a sentimental feeling aroused in us chiefly by the extraordinary phenomena of nature? or is it a real addition to our knowledge of the divine character, increasing as our knowledge of nature increases, and entering into our daily life? The Scripture speaks to us of 'the visible things which testify of the invisible'; of the permanence of the world: 'He hath set the round world so fast that it cannot be moved'; of the infinite or infinitesimal care of Providence: 'Even the hairs of your head are all numbered.' These, like many other words of Scripture, we may link to modern thoughts, and find in them a natural figure or expression of some recently discovered truths. But no one will maintain that the uniformity of nature, in the sense in which this term is understood by scientific men of the present day, is taught in the Old or New Testament. The sacred writers knew nothing of the indestructibility of matter, of the correlation of forces, of the interdependence of soul and body, of the antiquity of man, of the still greater, almost unmeasurable antiquity of the world, of the infinity of the heavens. They never considered this earth to be but as a grain or molecule in the ocean of immensity. It remains for us to reflect how, and to what extent, these truths of science affect our knowledge or consciousness of the divine nature.

First, they present to us the merely physical great-

ness of God in a manner which would formerly have been inconceivable to us; they give a sort of material reality to the words eternity and infinity, which overpowers and almost oppresses. The boundaries of nature are enlarged, and the realm of the God of nature is enlarged also. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork.' With how much greater wonder must we repeat these words when we look out upon the heavens through the telescope, and measure, though imperfectly, the incredible distance of the stars and the rapidity of their motions. And with how much deeper feeling must we therefore add, 'Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?' We might have feared that He, who had so vast an empire, in His care of the greater would have overlooked the lesser: but we find, in looking through the microscope, that science has another wonder in store for us, a wonder of minuteness, as well as of vastness, and that not only man but the least of all animals invisible to the naked eye have their perfectly-formed structures and their place in the economy of the world.

But the conception of the laws of nature touches our own lives far more nearly, and teaches us far more about the manner in which God deals with us than either the greatness or minuteness of nature. They show us that He is a God of order, not of disorder. If the infinity of the world seems for a moment

to distract us, the thought of these restores us to ourselves and Him. The word 'law' has some disturbing associations of external compulsion and the like; it is often opposed to morality, as it is in the Scripture to faith. And in applying the conception to our own lives we shall do well sometimes not to speak of law, but to think rather of harmony, of regularity, of the freedom which is given by order, of the communion of ourselves with nature. The Scripture tells us that 'in Him we live and move and have our being.' And so we find as matter of experience, whatever higher meaning these words have, that His laws, as we term them, enter into us and are a part of us, and that we cannot escape from them if we would. They are at once the limits set to us and the powers by which we act. We are free agents, not in spite of them, but in consequence of them: without them we should be nowhere—the sport of chance or accident—occasionally, shall I say, relieved by the stretching out of a Divine Hand.

These laws teach us unmistakably how God governs the world; and, if we would co-operate with Him, we must know what they are. They do not prove that happiness is always the reward of virtue, or that suffering is the punishment of sin. They seem rather to show us that in endless and complex ways the spiritual well-being of man is bound up with his physical, that individuals are greatly influenced by their circumstances, that all men, although they have

freedom of choice about good and evil, and are responsible for their actions, yet remain within a certain natural limit which they cannot pass. We see that the purely spiritual power which we can exercise over ourselves and others is narrower than we might at first sight suppose. But on the other hand the power which we can exert by the right use of means is very great; or rather, I may say, that of the two together is almost unbounded. The one leads, the other follows; the one indicates the end, the other the active steps which enable us to attain it. If a man would improve his own mind he must study the laws of the mind, the effect of habit, circumstances, intellectual influence, and the like. He must also realize to himself his own internal experience. Mere prayer, or devotional exercises, or the making of good resolutions, or the attempt to enforce some abstract principle on himself will not impart to him a harmonious principle of life or growth. He must understand human nature; he must learn to act what he thinks. Or, to take another illustration. Suppose a person desirous to reform the inhabitants of some neglected parish or district: he will not merely try to impress upon them some doctrine or even the greatest truth of the Gospel, but he will seek to raise their moral by improving their material condition; he will influence them through their natural affections, he will draw their children to the school; he will observe many causes which affect their health, of which

they are wholly unconscious. In short, he will strive to apply all that doctrine about habits and circumstances, and the laws which affect the physical well-being of man, to the service of his fellow creatures.

So God teaches us that we must worship Him through His laws and not beside them; not casting one eye upon earth, and lifting the other to heaven, but recognizing His presence at once and immediately in our homes and streets: may we not say, the nearer the duty, the nearer is God present in it? We have no reason to suppose that prayer will alter the fixed laws of this world; but God has shown us how, by the right use of means, we may vary without breaking them, so far at least as to receive all the good of them and to avoid the evil. The power which we have over them is no violation or infringement of them, but is included in them. And thus a new religion of nature springs up, not like the old religion, blind and helpless, but intelligent, recognizing in every addition to our knowledge of physical or social laws the possibility of adding something to the improvement of mankind and to our knowledge of the divine nature.

3. There remains the third division, of which I must briefly speak; the inferences which we may draw respecting the nature of God from abstract ideas or reasonings, or in other words from the divine attributes. Abstract ideas are apt to have a bad name with us; they seem to belong to philosophy rather than to

religion, and we sometimes speak of them contemptuously as mere abstractions. The Bible is not a book of abstractions; it speaks to us heart to heart; it can rarely be said to appeal to general motives for a confirmation of the truths which it teaches. It tells us indeed that God is just; 'For how else,' as St. Paul says, 'can He judge the world?' It tells us, again, that God is love: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' Once more, it tells us that God is true: 'Yea, though every man be a liar.' But the Bible does not attempt to draw out the consequences of attributing to the divine nature, first, justice; secondly, love; thirdly, truth; or, in one word, perfection. It tells us, again, that 'our Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Here, then, is a legitimate field in which the Christian theologian may seek to extend our knowledge of God: we all speak of God as being a Moral Being; he may show us what is inevitably involved in these words. And many erroneous inferences drawn sometimes from a partial use of Scripture may be corrected, and the supposed antagonism between religion and morality removed. And in daily life and practice we may feel how great a thing it is to trust ourselves to a perfect God.

For example, if we attribute to God perfect justice, we cannot say He will pass over our offences without punishment; or that, having regard to the frailty of His creatures, He views with equal favour the righteous and the wicked. But we can say that nothing acci-

dental, nothing capricious, enters into His government; He will not inflict disproportionate punishment, He will not lay down arbitrary conditions which He insists on our fulfilling; He will not fix a time before which all may be retrieved, after which all is for ever lost. We are right in assuming this about God, because we should infer it about any just or good man. To suppose anything else would be to suppose that the justice of God falls short even of a moderate degree of human justice. There is a great deal of comfort, not without awe, in all this. And we may go a step further. For the justice of God is based upon perfect knowledge. He sees not only all the evil but all the good which is in us, the unexpressed wish to become better, the least sense of sorrow for the past; and often He does not judge us as man judges us.

So again of His love and truth. The Scripture tells us that God is love, and that He wills all men to be saved. Or, again, 'He concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.' There is no qualification of this; no exception to it. Can it be limited to those who have heard the message of Christ and been saved by believing on Him? The idea of divine love carries us far beyond this, to think of a love of God which is inexhaustible, not confined to the good only, but extended to all, and not resting satisfied while even a single individual among His creatures remains estranged from Him. There may be ways by which He has provided that 'His banished ones be

not expelled from Him.' We shall do well to think of the state of being in which we are here, of that in which we shall be hereafter, as a state of education in which He is drawing us nearer to Himself and to the truth. Of such things we may meditate although we cannot describe or define them. They are hidden from our eyes, like that time of which the Apostle speaks in the words of the text, 'When the Son Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' But although we are unable to tell in what manner the work of love can be accomplished, any more than we can tell how the dead are raised up, we do not therefore cease to acknowledge, in the fullness of its consequences, the first and greatest of all articles of belief, that God is Love.

Once more, if God is truth, what is the inference? It is not a particular truth, but all truth, which we must identify with Him; the truths of science as well as the truths of religion or morals; the temper of truth everywhere, even when seemingly antagonistic to Christianity. Is not this again an enlargement of our idea of God? To the student, especially in these days, the thought that any inquiry honestly pursued cannot be displeasing to the God of truth is a great source of peace and comfort. He is better able to meet the attacks of his fellow-men when he is stayed upon the God of truth, and he feels that his duty towards knowledge is also a duty towards God. He

is conscious that his life is innocent though many may condemn him. And sometimes he will seem to see the God of truth looking down upon the violence and party spirit of the world and of the Church.

These three—justice, love, truth—are the three great attributes of the divine nature, aspects of the one perfection which God is. When they meet in our hearts God may be said to take up His abode within us.

Let us take away with us the thought of a great writer—'Certainly, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.'

VII

FEELING AFTER GOD[1].

THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK THE LORD, IF HAPLY THEY MIGHT FEEL AFTER HIM, AND FIND HIM.

Acts xvii. 27.

In some previous sermons I endeavoured to trace the growth of the idea of God in the heart of man; as it existed before the Christian religion, in Greek philosophy, or in the great religions of the East; in the Old Testament; as it was revealed to us in Jesus Christ; as it had been perpetually corrected and enlarged by the reflections of great thinkers, by the experience of common life, by the ever-widening circle of natural science. The thought of God has formed the mind of man, and has renewed the face of the world; it is the element of light and life which has united and purified the scattered fragments of the human race; which has moulded wandering tribes into mighty nations; which, like the sun in the heavens overpowering the morning mist, has slowly infused into the consciousness of mankind the truth that 'He hath made of one blood all nations of the earth'; and not only all nations, but all churches, all ranks of society, all forms of religion and of civilization. And, returning

[1] Preached at Balliol, Feb. 18, 1877.

from the extremity of the heavens, this principle of light and life shines also in our own hearts: 'In His light do we see light.'

I had intended to complete this short course of five sermons with a sixth, in which I was going to speak of the application of the thought of God to our daily life; for there would be little use in attempting to trace the workings of a divine power in history or in nature if we did not recognize the presence of it in our own hearts. But it seemed to me, in reviewing the subject once more, that there was still a phase of religion which remained to be considered, not peculiar to any one age or country or state of society, but common to all in which there has been any enlightened knowledge of divine things. There is what may be called 'the imperfect or half-belief in God,' which is not untrue, but weak; which has a desire for holiness and perfection, but is unable to think of them as realities. For not only in Gentile but in Christian times men have been 'feeling after God if haply they may find Him.' Most persons who have seriously reflected about religion would acknowledge that at times they have felt depressed and were unable to recognize the presence of God in the world, or to justify His ways to men. As the psalmist says: 'Then sought I to understand this, but it was too hard for me.' His difficulty, as you will remember, was that old one not yet perhaps completely answered: 'How could the ungodly be in such prosperity and

flourishing like a green bay tree?' The authors of the Book of Job and of Ecclesiastes seem hardly and with difficulty, amid the appearances of the world around them, to have recognized a light beyond. Whole ages and countries, in the language of Scripture, turn away from God, and He hides His face from them. There have been periods in the world's history, such as the first century before and after the Christian era, or the tenth or the fifteenth century after Christ, or the eighteenth century terminating in the French Revolution, in which the power of religion has visibly declined and the belief in God almost disappeared, at least in some countries and among the educated classes; and then again there have been renewals and revivals. In some cases this alienation from religion has been almost wholly evil; in others it has been the assertion of some truth or principle supposed to be at variance with religion, or a witness against some religious corruption.

In the opinion of many we are ourselves passing into one of these phases of irreligion. Just as we seem to be arriving at true notions of religion, and long before we have exhausted the great thought of a divine perfection, we are told by some that the belief in God is passing away; not to speak of that short and easy formula in which the history of the human race has been summed up: 'first we were polytheists, then we became monotheists, and now, after a brief interval of metaphysical confusion, we are atheists.' Not to

speak, I say, of this foolish formula, which is flagrantly at variance with facts, there are some signs that religious belief is not in the same position as formerly. A large proportion, perhaps the majority, of our artisan class are said to be without religion. Our men of science do not for the most part acknowledge the miraculous or supernatural, and with the belief in these all religious truth is sometimes supposed to be bound up. The great additions to our knowledge made in these latter days have been gained chiefly by observation and experience: thus the seen tends to prevail over the unseen, and the habit of men's minds alters accordingly. The extraordinary change in the religious opinion which has taken place during the last forty years is not favourable to the strength or permanence of religious convictions; for the movement in one direction provokes a reaction in another: when a certain amount of critical or analysing power is applied to it, the *via media* easily separates into the extremes. Religious bodies, when they become aware of their divergence from the world, instead of attempting to find terms of reconciliation, generally proceed along their own narrow path towards a more extreme dogmatism and a more rigid organization. There are times also when old grounds of belief, such as were supplied by the unreflecting appeal to Scripture, seem to crumble under our feet. Then a great deal of trouble arises in the world, and a great deal of alarm is caused both in our minds and in those of

others who care for us. There is also a real danger that we shall not be strong enough to live through these times of transition in which our lot is cast, but may make shipwreck of our morals or of our faith. I think it may be of some use that we should endeavour to understand the state of the world in which we live, for 'if a man walk in the day he stumbleth not.' I will therefore propose this question for our consideration—'Why is there so much less appearance of God in the world than formerly? and how far is this disappearance real, how far illusion?' Two thoughts may be silently present to our minds in the attempt to analyse these phenomena: first, that whether we like it or not we cannot recall the past, past opinions, past usages, and the like; for they are in the past, and it is not in the past but in the present that we are living, not in the twelfth century but in the nineteenth; secondly, that our belief in God has nothing to do with His actual existence. If all men were blind the sun would be still shining in the heavens. Truths of all sorts have existed from the beginning of time which are either hidden from us or of which we are only just beginning to be conscious.

All human things are imperfect, and the good and evil in them grow together, and are inextricably entwined with one another. There is greater good, and perhaps greater evil, in religion than in anything else, and a more subtle combination of them than in

other forms of life and action. In a critical age such as our own this blended mass of good and evil is easily decomposed. Mankind are always turning out the seamy side of religion to the light. They see that the practice of professing Christians in daily life scarcely has any relation to the precepts of Christ. They reckon up the crimes of churches in former ages; the bloody wars, the terrible persecutions, the slavery of the mind, worse than the confinement of the body, which fanaticism and superstition have brought upon the world. They find even now the spirit of religious party clogging the efforts made by statesmen and others for the education and improvement of mankind. They observe that those who make no profession of religion are often more honourable and upright in their dealings than those who are very much under the influence of religious beliefs. Considering all these things, they are tempted to think with the Roman poet of old that the new negation of religion is an emancipation and enlargement of human nature. They are happy in having cast under their feet the traditions of priests, the curious lore of sacred books, the terrors of the world to come. Their text is 'Tantum relligio potuit suadere malorum.' Without denying the existence of God, they believe that nothing is to be known of Him, and that He can only be connected with us, if at all, by the laws of external nature.

But have they ever considered the other side of the

question? Have they ever thought of the influence which religion has exercised in consecrating the ties of the family or of the state in primitive times; or of the sanction which it has given to law and to morality, or of the higher elements which it has introduced into the world? It may be that there are many hypocrites or half hypocrites among Christians, that many more are indifferent, that society generally wears the aspect of business or pleasure, and does not show in any striking manner a regard for religion. But have the words of Christ therefore lost their power? Is the life of self-sacrifice less real in its effects? We might indeed reduce our theory to our practice; but then again our practice would always be falling lower and lower. For the words and the example of the few are the supports which sustain the many in the path of life. To the uneducated especially it is in the language of religion we must speak, of the love of God, of the sufferings of Christ; this is the way in which we can teach them, not by theories of happiness or the newest criticisms on Scripture. As Christians and lovers of truth we do not shrink from the examination of these ancient writings, and many discoveries are being made about them which would have been startling to our forefathers. It is very likely that these inquiries may in the end purify and elevate instead of weakening our faith. But meanwhile let us not forget that these books have been and are the bread of life to the Christian world;

the best men have found in them, or derived from them, their highest thoughts; the wayfarer has not erred upon the whole in gathering from them their true lesson; to the uneducated they have been literature and philosophy, their support in life, their consolation in death. The habit of reading the Bible has been good both for the head and the heart; the neglect of it would sensibly lower both the character and the intelligence of a country.

Those who talk in the manner which I was describing take a narrow view of themselves and of their fellow men; they do not understand the depth and capabilities of human nature. They do not consider how much energy for good, how much force of character, how much intellectual life would be lost if religion were to disappear among us. They think of men as they appear in public only—in business or at a festival—and forget their private needs. They see them in the mass only; they have not present to their minds the long internal history of sorrows and trials which many of us have passed through; the times of sickness and depression; the often returning thought, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' They have looked at the surface of life only and not seen within. The time has not yet come when they feel themselves that something more than this world is required by them.

There is another tendency of this analytical age which weakens the hold of religion upon the human

mind. Men remark that all our notions of God come to us through what is human, through language, through our own faculties, through our own ideas of right and wrong. This they call 'anthropomorphism,' which they would have us cast away, or acknowledge that not God but only a perfected humanity is the object of our worship. But how otherwise can we know God except through our own conceptions of what is holiest and highest? Would they have us get out of our own minds and strive to apprehend Him by some new kind of intuition? The perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only image which we are capable of attaining of the perfect God. Human ideas when purely abstract are also unmeaning; they can only acquire a meaning when they find an expression in the things which we know. We may describe the divine nature by negatives; we may say of God that He is infinite, that He is without parts or passions, that He is incorporeal and the like. But to say all this of Him is not half so much as to say that He is just and loving and true. For although these words describe human qualities, they are the highest human qualities which we know: we can imagine them existing in a far higher degree than they are found in this world, and through them we dimly see a perfection beyond them in which they rest and unite.

In the third place I would remark that the thought of God is of necessity much greater and more difficult to us than to any former age. Primitive nations had

local gods only, gods of the hills and not of the valleys; at last they became the gods of nations; and finally, in Christianity and in the later Greek philosophy, there is one God of all nations of the earth. But we have to think of Him as the God of myriads of worlds far beyond what the eye or telescope can reach, infinite in the extent of His power, and also in its minuteness, in the furthest extremity of heaven, and yet very near to every one of us. The figures of the prophets and of the Book of Revelation, which describe the unseen world as a place above or below us which God and His angels make their habitation, or the powers of evil their stronghold, seem to fade away before the facts of natural science. Then, again, the littleness of this earth, which we once supposed to be the centre of all things, hardly more in the ocean of space than a point or a drop of water, is a very overwhelming thought. Whatever people may say to those who reflect on these things, there is greater difficulty in realizing the unseen than formerly. However we describe or conceive God, whether as the mind of the world, or as the law of the world, or as the Father of the world, we are led more and more to feel that His nature is inscrutable to us, and can be no more expressed in words or figures of speech than in the graven images of the olden time. Again, as the notion of a perfect God becomes more present to us, so also the contradictions which the appearances of the world offer to this per-

fection strike forcibly upon the mind. Mankind place things side by side now which formerly were not seen to be inconsistent; objections which used to sleep quietly enough now demand a well-considered answer. One perhaps asks to have the law of cause and effect reconciled with the responsibility of man; another repeats the favourite theological paradox, 'Why, if God is all-powerful and all-wise, does He permit the existence of evil?' I can very well imagine that the theory of the struggle for existence, of which we have heard so much during the last fifteen years, may produce a very painful impression on the minds of unthinking persons, because appearing to them so contradictory to the love of God towards all His creatures. 'There is not a sparrow that falls to the ground without your Father.' The facts or speculations respecting the origin of society, or even of the family, so unlike that Garden of Eden of which our fathers dreamed, are very likely to have a similar effect. These inquiries I mention, not to refute them (they are not to be refuted by the way or in a moment), but simply with one object—to show that religious belief is not so easy a matter as it once was, and that this generation is not to be accused of greater irreligion than their predecessors because they are unable at once to adjust all these marvellous discoveries and novel inquiries in their true relation to their own traditional belief, or even to see how they can be reconciled with very simple truths of religion

and morality. That is the task which God has assigned to us, and not to us only, but to every succeeding generation of Christians, to entwine the old with the new, to heal that great breach which seems to have arisen between religion and knowledge, and to some extent between religion and morality.

Once more, this disappearance of God from the thoughts of men, though partly real, is partly also an illusion arising out of distinctions of language and artificial divisions of thought, which oppose one truth or one class of mankind to another when there is no real opposition, or only a partial one, between them. We often speak as if religion was one thing and morality another, as if the conscious recognition of God was the only good or obligation of human life, as if the unconscious service of Him, however sincere, was almost displeasing to Him. Virtue and vice have a different train of associations from holiness and sin: among some professors of Christianity there has been more zeal against good works than against bad ones. A good man in the phraseology of many persons means only some one of their own religious opinion or of their own political party. But is it not true of all that 'by their fruits ye shall know them'? And is not moral virtue, by whatever name described, the greater part of religion? Again, we oppose God to the laws of the world, and teachers of religion who speak to us of Him from within to teachers of natural philosophy who speak to us of His laws only, and whom we

sometimes rate as atheists. But is there really any opposition between God and His laws, between Scripture and nature, between the starry heaven above and the moral law within? Or, again, can a man really be an atheist, whether he will or no, who sees the mind working in the world, who acknowledges the presence of intelligence in the structures of plants and minerals, who reverently meditates on the order of the whole? Is not the term 'materialist' or 'atheist' a misnomer? For even supposing such an one as I have been describing to allow of no other kind of knowledge than that which is presented to us by the physical world, still he recognizes a part at least of the work of God in nature. In religion, as in life generally, the various occupations of men have an effect on their minds; and it is useless to expect that the man of business or the man of science will accept religious truth in precisely the same form with the minister of the Gospel.

To illustrate what I am saying, I will make a supposition which may seem bold, or perhaps even startling, to those who are unable to rise above words to things. The word God, etymologists tell us, is not connected with good or goodness, but is an old Teutonic word signifying a graven image (so strange is the history of words, 'the most despised things, and the things that are nought,' become the expressions of 'the things that most truly are'). Now I will suppose that the name of God and, shall I add, the word

Person, was no longer in use; that in our public services and in our private prayers it ceased to be the symbol or expression by which we described the holiest and highest; but that, instead of using this word, all mankind with one voice worshipped truth and justice and goodness united in a divine perfection, not an idea only, but a power really existing; and that to this perfection they attributed all those qualities which we are in the habit of attributing to God—should we be justified in calling them atheists? Ought they not rather to be included among Christians, since all that is essential to the notion of God they already hold? I might make a further supposition that all mankind agreed about the name of God, and yet ascribed to Him all that is most repugnant to His true nature, as the old Greek philosopher of 600 B.C. said Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods all that is detestable in man. Are we to call such worshippers of devils theists any more than we are justified in calling the others atheists? or shall we reply in irony, a little parodying the famous answer of Pascal to the Jesuits, 'They are Christians who agree in the word and disagree about the thing meant by it; they are not Christians who disagree about the word and agree about the thing.' It would be absurd to carry out the fancy which I have been supposing, or to banish altogether the name of God from the world while seeking to retain a conception of the divine nature; for words too have a sacredness, and we cannot alter them at pleasure.

But it is not absurd sometimes to discard the ordinary use of language and to seek to form a conception of religious truths without employing the technical terms in which theologians have described them. Half the controversies in the world would have been at an end if this condition had been imposed upon them; neither can we really understand religious or any other propositions if we are unable to 're-word' them. We do not know ourselves, nor can any one else know, whether we have pierced beneath the environment of language which encloses them to the truth within. See what follows if from time to time we discipline our minds by the practice of such a method in our judgement of men. We can no longer divide them into theists and atheists, religious and irreligious, or consistent Christians and non-Christians; we must think, not of the name by which they call themselves, or are called, but of the degree in which consciously or unconsciously they conform to the will of God and imitate the life of Christ. They may be eastern prophets or Greek philosophers; they may be men of science of our own day whose minds are absorbed in second causes, as they are termed; the question is no longer one of names. But whosoever loves righteousness and truth is accepted of Him. No principle short of this will reconcile us to ourselves, to God, and to the world. Then a new aspect is given both to theology and life. There is no longer an opposition between secular and religious employments or between

secular and religious knowledge, but all who in their several ranks are doing their duty are fulfilling the will of God; all who are discovering and teaching truth are revealing Him. The physician whose pursuits seem naturally to draw his mind to material causes in his unpaid ministrations among the poor may be thought to bear the image of Him who carried our sorrows and healed our infirmities; and so of other classes. The hurry of this world, the struggle for their daily bread, the absorption of thought, may lead some men not to recognize consciously, so much as they should, the Author of their being. Then, in forming a judgement of them, let us remember that their relation to God is not to be measured by words or other external signs, but by the main tenour of their lives.

This is what I will venture to call the doctrine of Christians in unconsciousness—of those who, not having seen, yet have believed—of those who say, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' It cannot but be that in times of transition such as the present great confusions and misunderstandings should arise. Many persons are in their wrong places; some who are called Christians having no higher claim than success in life, while others who are setting the highest examples of disinterestedness and integrity are by some accident placed beyond the Christian pale. The doctrine which I have been endeavouring to preach is a very simple one; that we should habitually regard

ourselves and others, not according to the names by which we are called or the professions which we make or the party to which we belong, but more and more as we and they appear in the sight of God, and as we believe that one day we shall appear to ourselves; and that of God Himself we should think as existing consciously as well as unconsciously to us in the surrounding world, in the lower things of earth as well as in the higher, that He is the inspirer of the best thoughts too, and that where good is there is God. The times in which we live are said to be liable to peculiar changes, and a note of alarm is often sounded about them, sometimes on very trifling grounds; or again, from a deeper consideration of the tendencies of events men fancy that the world is going to pass into a new era, that the ages of faith have departed, and that some new age of science or sociology is to take their place. There is an excitement in novelty, which gives an attraction to strange forms of religion and to strange notions in philosophy. But experience seems to show that the great principles of human nature change slowly; there is no reason to fear that the heavens are about to descend upon our heads or the earth to swallow us up. One by one we shall pass away, and all things will remain, if not really the same, yet much more the same than we are apt to suppose. Another generation will succeed to our fears and hopes, to our sorrows and joys, to our speculations and intellectual interests. But, though

we may banish idle and alarmist terrors, we cannot deny that this age, perhaps more than others, has peculiar trials. It seems as if men required more force of character in this than in former times. More than ever it is impossible that what is wholly or partly conventional should stand. If religion is to be lasting it must be real, a religion of deeds and not of words, or it will be quickly swept away in the tide of new impressions and influences from all sources which daily succeed one another. This is the peculiarity of times of transition, that they test the true characters of men. Some are carried away by every wind; others take hold of deeper principles, and are soon in a safe anchorage. If I were asked, How can a man be shielded or shield himself from the dangers which surround him? I would not in answer prescribe the books which he should read or the opinions which he should hold; but I should say, By the innocency of his life and the quiet and patient fulfilment of his duties here as a preparation for the service of God in after life.

VIII

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD[1].

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD.

COLOSSIANS i. 15.

THE first principles of religion often seem to retire from view and lose their interest, while lesser questions exert an absorbing hold on the mind. They are put on one side, and when they are wanted can hardly be found; they are supposed to have been settled long ago, and every man, or at least every Christian, is thought to know them by intuition, whatever may have been the ignorance of them which prevailed formerly in the Gentile world. This is especially the case with the truths which relate to the nature of God. They are buried under ground, and no one considers whether this foundation of religious truth is straw or stubble, ingeniously hidden in the depths of the earth, or the divine rock on which the temple is to stand for eternal ages. They are regarded as truisms, about which little remains to be said, and which are of small importance in com-

[1] Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, Oct. 25, 1874.

parison with the religious topics of the day, the doctrine of Baptism or Confession, or the manner of Christ's Presence in the Sacrament, or the inspiration of Scripture, or the authority of the priesthood, or the union of the churches which have retained Episcopal ordination, and the like.

And yet, my brethren, it is quite clear that without a great effort both of the heart and of the intellect we can never really attain a knowledge of God. In religion, as in other things, the truths which are simplest are also the deepest. And in the changes of human opinion, amid the storms of controversy, we seem to come back to them as to 'the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' To say that God is just or true, or that He is a God of love, is not difficult; these are familiar expressions to which Christians have been used almost from infancy. But it is very difficult to realize what is meant by them, or to live in the habitual consciousness of them, or to make them prevail over other notions or expressions which are apparently at variance with them. The Jews in old times were constantly relapsing into idolatry because they could not endure the purely spiritual nature of God. The solitude of the desert seemed to be too terrible to them when they were left alone with Him. Might they not at least worship the sun, or the queen of heaven, or the star of the god Remphan? That was the feeling against which the prophets were vainly striving during all the earlier period of Jewish

history. And do we suppose that human nature has now changed, or that this worship of idols has altogether ceased among ourselves? The superstitions of all religions—Catholic or Protestant, Christian or Pagan, Jew or Gentile—differ more in name than in reality. For there are idols of the mind which take the place of visible images; idols of tradition, of language, which come between us and God; idols of the temple too, in which good and evil seem to be inseparably blended, and the good is near and present, and the evil is only recognized in some fatal but distant consequences. And this is not the only difficulty in preserving clear as a mirror the conception of a perfect God. Some adjustment is required of His various attributes; and at the same time we must allow for the difference between things human and divine. Even many of the expressions of Scripture in which the nature of God is described, if isolated from other expressions, and from the conscience of man, or not considered in reference to the age and country in which they were uttered, may easily mislead us. If in the excess of reverence or fear we allow the notion of His power to prevail over His justice, we may represent Him as worse than some Eastern tyrant, and ourselves, His creatures, as crouching before Him, hardly hoping to turn away His anger with gifts and flatteries. Or if we think of His justice to the exclusion of His love, then instead of a God who 'wills that all men should be

saved,' we have a Being more unpitying, more implacable in His resentments, than the devil himself. Or, again, we may so exaggerate the ignorance of man that we seem to know nothing of Him, and are ready to accept anything which is told us about Him. Hardly, with all our care when addressing Him in prayer, can we avoid attaching to Him the shadow of some human infirmity, such as change of purpose, or particular likes and dislikes of persons or opinions. A good man who lives constantly in communion with God will often fail to recognize that all other men in every nation and in every rank of life are equally His care. The highest privilege of an individual is sometimes supposed to be the right of doing what he will with his own, and even this false maxim of an evil state of society has been blasphemously transferred to the Most High. There is a similar illusion when God is supposed to take a delight in external things, in beautiful colours, sounds, forms, scents, ceremonies, because they are pleasing to us; or in the building of churches after some ancient pattern, and as an end, not as a means, forgetting that 'the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands'; and that the least things which directly affect a human soul are far more costly and precious in His sight than the highest refinements of decoration and art.

Therefore I shall make no apology for bringing before you this subject, which is at once the first and simplest, and also the most interesting, and perhaps

one of the least considered of all subjects of theology —the nature of God. I shall begin with God's dealings with us in the physical world, and then endeavour to show how we may rise out of that to the moral and spiritual; and that these are not antagonistic to one other as is sometimes supposed—the physical warring against the moral, the moral against the spiritual—but consistent; and the different aspects under which God presents Himself to us, as the God of nature, of men, and also of the world of spirits. And, lastly, I shall endeavour to reflect this argument upon ourselves, and show in what way we ought to worship God and hold communion with Him, as being ourselves a part of the visible order of nature, as conscious of a moral law, and also as having relations to a world of spirits, on the confines of which we are, and which we dimly know to be infinite and eternal.

In the first place, then, we must acknowledge that God governs the world by fixed laws, and does not alter these laws at our wish or request. This is that great truth of the order of nature which science presents to us in every possible form, and with every token and evidence which experience teaches us, if we do but attend to her, in every act of our lives, and which nevertheless we sometimes seem disposed to set aside and ignore, or to which we yield only a forced or reluctant assent. Let us endeavour to put the thought of this clearly before the mind's eye; let

us imagine some one, I will not say 'a little lower than the angels,' but a natural philosopher, who is capable of seeing creation, not with our imperfect vision and hazy fancies, but with a real scientific insight into the world in which we live. He would behold the reign of law everywhere, in the least things as well as in the greatest, in the most complex as well as in the simplest, in the life of man as well as of the animals, extending to organic as well as inorganic substances; in all the sequences, combinations, adaptations, motions, intentions of nature, he would recognize the same law and order—one and continuous in all the different spheres of knowledge, in all the different realms of nature, through all times and over all space. Nowhere would the microscope or the telescope reveal to him any spring or interval in which, as in some cracked jar, a hand or finger might be inserted; nowhere would there be an aperture in nature through which the light of another world might come streaming. He would trace the most seemingly capricious of earthly things, such as the winds and the mists, to their ocean home; to us they are the type of human mutability, but he would know that they are really subject to laws as fixed as those by which the stone falls to the ground: in the processes of birth and death he would also recognize the uniformity of causes which could not be set aside. He would confess too that the actions of men and the workings of the mind are inseparable from the physi-

cal antecedents or accompaniments which prepare for them or co-operate with them, and that they are ordered and adjusted as parts of a whole. Nor will he deny, when he looks up at the heavens, that this earth with its endless variety of races and languages and infinity of human interests (each one so intense and particular at some time or other to some individual man) is only to be regarded as a pebble on the sea-shore, or as a point in immensity, in comparison with the universe. And in this universe, at the utmost limit to which the most powerful instruments will carry the eye of man, there is still the same order reappearing everywhere, the same uniformity of nature, the same force which acts upon the earth.

This is that law of nature, one and continuous in all times and places, which may be truly said to be the visible image of God, and 'her voice the harmony of the world.' And in ages to come it is not only possible, but probable, that this reign of law in the world will become much more visible and intelligible to all classes, educated as well as uneducated, than at present; and the natural sciences, which in our own day appeared to sink almost overpowered under the load of facts and details, may attain to much greater unity and simplicity; and the relation of the moral to the physical world be better understood. At present this conception of law is regarded with suspicion amongst us, especially by religious men; they seem to be afraid that the wit of man is devising a plan

for shutting God out of the world which He has made. They do not, and indeed cannot, wholly deny the order of nature, but they wish that there might be exceptions to the rule expressly for them. As if God could be seen through chinks and crannies, or might be peeped at with a candle and in a corner, and was not visible in the light of day and in the face of the wide heavens. And yet these are the doubts of good and religious men, and deserve the fairest consideration at our hands. Perhaps these objections may in some degree arise from want of explanation, or from some illusion of language; and if they could only see that a God was still left them, and that they were not bound fast in chains of fate, they would no longer rebel against the dominion of law.

They ask why we speak of things which are so painful to them and so much at variance with their sense of religion. The answer is because they are true, and no religion can be lasting which does not rest on the truth. And no religion can avoid falling into contradiction and unreality which takes into account one side of human nature only and ignores the other. The story of the Brahmin who was shown through a microscope the detested insects in the water which he had been drinking, and who broke the microscope, is in point here. But that is not the sort of answer which the Christian would like to give to a man of science who told him of the uniformity of the laws of nature. Come, then, and let us reason with

this good man who is afraid that the theories of philosophers are banishing him from his God. Has he ever pursued his thought and asked himself what he means by interruptions and interferences in the course of nature? Has he ever considered how many misplacements and rearrangements would have to be made before his prayers could procure for him the advantage of a favourable wind or the desired fall of rain? Has he ever asked himself how the answers to his own request would be reconciled with those of others? Let him not suppose that he is shut up in a prison, or that the philosopher who speaks of fixed laws means to say that the earth is intersected with straight lines, and is not full of forms of freedom and beauty. Would you rather live, we will say to him, in a house, or carry on an employment, in which there is no order, or in which there is order? Or would you rather travel through a country in which there are roads, or in which there are no roads? Or would you have your own life and that of your family conform to certain laws and customs or not? Or, again, would you prefer a condition of life in which you can (for the most part) foresee and calculate the future and avoid evils, or a condition in which you can foresee and avoid nothing? And in which case are you the most free and most the master of your own actions? amid order or disorder? in a civilized country which has roads and laws, or in an uncivilized? in a state of life which is dark and deprived of expe-

rience, or in one which is lighted up by history and science? Is there anything in the controlling power of law which prevents your choosing between right and wrong, or which hinders you from holding communion with God and Christ? Cease, then, to make this opposition of words between religion and science, between God and His works. For if there is no reconciliation of them, and if the truths of religion are really inconsistent with the order of nature, then Christianity must inevitably pale away before the advance of natural knowledge.

Therefore we thankfully look upon the world as a scene of law and order, in which the countless multitudes are marching along the highway of God's providence, and 'they do not break their ranks,' but are obedient, as we may say in a figure, to the will of their Leader. Such a view, instead of shutting out God from the world, seems rather to restore the world to Him, and, instead of taking us away from God, to bring us nearer to Him. And if a person comes to us and says that there may be interruptions in the course of nature, and that we cannot see them because we can affirm nothing certainly, and, therefore, cannot be certain that there are not, to him we reply that, while humbly admitting the 'existence of more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy,' we cannot desert the strong ground of experience or give up the very foundations of knowledge for the sake of an imaginary gain to faith.

I know that it may be objected that God's government of the world by fixed laws is in many cases inconsistent with His justice, or at least that only a sort of rough rudimentary justice is to be discerned in them. The fair infant dying of a cough,

'Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,'

because some one has neglected the conditions of health, is not an example of divine justice. And if the question which was once put to Christ is asked in such a case, 'Which did sin, this child or its parents?' the answer will be in the same spirit: Neither this child nor its parents, but that the laws of health and physical well-being might be vindicated. There is no act of justice in this, but a lesson and a warning. And if the objector again retorts, Yes, but might not the same lesson have been taught without this waste of human life? the answer is: First, at any rate you have the power of saving life and removing the evil; and second, are you quite sure that this or any other evil may not be an imperfect good which will hereafter be perfected?

For, indeed, the objector is right if he means to say that the heart and conscience of man rise above this state of nature in which we live. There is something within him which is not satisfied, a sense of right or a longing desire for the good of other men, which demands more than he can find in this present world. Perhaps when gazing upon some pleasant prospect of

hill and woodland, and the sea beyond gleaming beneath the setting sun, or when he lifts up his eyes and beholds the stars coming out one by one in the azure heaven, he is tempted to think that this is the fairest of worlds. But ever and anon, when he recalls his own miserable condition and that of his fellow-men, the whole creation, which may be described, in the language of the Apostle, as 'groaning together until now,' waiting to be delivered; when he remembers the clouds of sin and passion which have darkened his own life, the imperfection of his best things, the festering masses of evil in our great towns, the heartlessness, the conventionality, the irrationality of mankind in general, he is strangely impressed with the contrast of the fairness of the world without and the sadness of the man within. He feels that he and his fellow-creatures were not meant for this, and that God has not left Himself without a witness higher than the order of nature or the common life of all men.

This is that moral law which He has implanted in our hearts, and which tells us not what is, but what ought to be, and what will be when His purposes are finally accomplished. This is that witness which tells of God—first, that He is true ('Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar'); second, that He is just ('Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'); third, that He is loving, and 'wills that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.' This is that law of which in a distant age and country the Greek

poet also spoke when he said, 'Who shall give me purity of word and deed, that I may observe the laws whose foundation is on high, and of which heaven is the only sire?' And again, 'For these things are not of to-day or yesterday, but live for ever, and no one knows from whence they came.' This is that law of duty which the philosopher summed up in his celebrated formula, 'Act so as to approve yourself to every rational intelligence.' This is that law of which the psalmists and the prophets speak with an enthusiasm which would strike us as wonderful if our ears were not deadened by familiarity: 'Thy testimonies are my delight day and night;' 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.' May not almost the whole Book of Psalms be described as a sort of rapture of the love of good and hatred of evil, accompanied by an intense consciousness that, amid all appearances to the contrary, God is ever on the side of right? Are not the prophecies again the revelation of the truth and justice and mercy of God?—not the second sight of future events, as some imagine, but a real revelation of God, in which the prophet is always rising above the visible and temporal, the ordinances and ceremonies of the Jewish law, the traditions of the Jewish people, correcting, enlarging, purifying them, struggling towards another world which he sees in the distance. 'Lo, O man, He hath shown thee what He requires of thee—to do

justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.' Is not this the sum of religion for all men everywhere? Might we not say, in the words of Christ, 'On this hang all the law and the prophets'?

This is that other and higher voice of law in the world whose seat is the bosom of God, to which not only Christ and the prophets witness, but in a measure the ancient legislators and philosophers also, 'feeling after God, if haply they might find Him'; the teachers and prophets of the East too, and good men everywhere; yea, and our own hearts also. Even those who have not acknowledged a personal God have yet recognized a principle of right higher than nature—a future which is to be preferred to the present, a better self which has the care and control over the worse, a duty to other men as well as to ourselves. Nor did any one ever really doubt the authority of a moral law.

But if this is true, and if there is really this opposition between the world in which we live and the perfection of which we have the conception in our minds, then we are led on to think of God as working out this moral law in the visible universe, first within and then without us, making right to be also might, and good to prevail over evil. This is that working of God in the world of which we see the beginnings and first impressions in this life, and of which we humbly hope to see the fulfilment in another. And this is what we chiefly mean when we speak of 'God

as a spirit'; that His spirit is witnessing with our spirit to the good which is in us, to the truth which is in us, to the love which is in us, to the justice which is in us, guiding, helping, leading us, going before us in the fulfilment of His will. We mean to say that in Him only we live and move and have our being; that in Him we have our true communion with our fellow-men, alive or dead (for all live unto Him); and that in Him only are all our hopes when we pass out of this world. The ancient philosopher said that God was the air, and in this image he seemed to find the symbol or image of a Being who was at once the breath of man and the breath of the universe. And something in the same way when we speak of God as a spirit we desire to express that the Infinite and Eternal is very near to us, who, though He reaches to the outermost heaven, is yet working with us in whatsoever things are good or true or pure or holy.

And when we think of the natural being subjected to the spiritual, and of the will of God becoming more and more manifest, we might go on to speak of an inspired communion of saints of which we too may hope to be partakers, in which the work which is beginning to be evident here will be finally consummated. But such speculations seem to carry us too far beyond the horizon of our actual knowledge—for we walk by faith and not by sight—and we wait with patience for whatever God is preparing in His good pleasure; and when imagination is sent out on

a voyage of discovery, the actual duties of our homes and employments are apt to be forgotten and lost in a sort of golden dream. It is safer to come back again and try to turn the light of these truths on our daily life. And therefore in what remains of this sermon I shall endeavour to point out the practical aspects of religion which flow from these 'reflections,' as I may term them, of the Eternal Being.

The first reflection or image of God was the order of the visible universe. In former ages men have been like heathens about this revelation of God in nature; their minds were darkened, and they never saw or observed what God intended them to see in the world around them. And even now, as I was saying before, many persons regard this great truth, this new source of light and life, not as a part of religion, but as an alien and enemy; and mankind are divided into two parties, the scientific and religious. Yet consider: we are never weary of recapitulating the wonders of science and art, the endless applications of the powers of nature, such as steam or electricity, and we are always reydy to talk of some new marvel of knowledge or contrivance to which every day may be expected to give birth. Now, too, we are beginning to be aware of the causes of life and death, and are not like helpless children when we have to meet 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness or the destruction that wasteth at noonday.' Now, for the first time, in the

nineteenth century, man may be said to have something like the mastery over the earth, to know where he is, and, as he recognizes himself more and more to be the creature of circumstances, to have more and more the power of controlling them.

And has this nothing to do with religion? Is it not obvious that, as our power over nature increases, our responsibility towards other men increases also? Do we not rather seem to want, I will not say a new religion, but a new application of religion, which shall teach us that we are answerable for the consequences of our actions even in things that have hitherto seemed indifferent—perhaps answerable for the good which we neglect to do as well as for the evil which we do? Our fathers lived 'in the times of that ignorance,' when nobody knew or thought about anything of this sort. But we who know that the life and health and character of men depend upon their outward circumstances, are we justified in leaving these outward circumstances the same? If another generation grows up in this country like the last, in the same state of poverty and misery and vice and disease and decay, who is responsible for this? Now that we know the causes of these evils and the remedies, are we not all responsible for them? For a certain form of organization and self-devotion, combined with knowledge and experience, would certainly remove them. A small portion of the energy and industry which is shown in the accumulation of wealth

would suffice in a few years to change the moral aspect of this nation.

A distinguished physiologist has said, 'There is scarcely a single page in my three physiological works in which God was not present to my mind. I regard the whole laws of the animal economy and of the universe as the direct dictate of the Deity, and, in urging compliance with them, it is with the earnestness and reverence due to a divine command that I do it. I almost lose the consciousness of self in the anxiety to attain the end; and, when I see clearly a law of God in our own nature, I rely upon its efficiency for good with a faith and peace which no storm can shake.' Might not we too, my brethren, like this good man, come to regard the promotion of the physical well-being of our fellow-creatures as the direct service of God, and even as a sort of worship of Him, quite as much as that we offer Him in churches? And when we are engaged in directing or executing tasks which are disagreeable or painful to us, and which have no religious or ecclesiastical association, may we not still have God present with us as the habitual thought of our mind?

Once more, from the principle of the order of the world do we not learn another lesson which is immediately applicable to our own lives? Nature, of which we are a part, works slowly by a succession of causes and effects, by an adaptation of means to ends, bearing the image of a divine repose amid the strife and

turmoil of men. May not the spirit of nature pass into our minds, teaching us order and regularity and resignation to the will of God? No efforts of ours can detach us from the conditions of our being; but we may submit to them, we may acknowledge them; and herein really lies our true peace and strength. We cannot recall the past, or be in age what we were in youth; we cannot do in sickness what we might have done in health; at death there may be something left unfinished which we should have liked to have completed. But we may recognize that these and all other states of life are the will of God, and to be used in His service; we may cheerfully acknowledge them to be our appointed lot, knowing also that this order of nature which surrounds us is not all, and that we have a hope of a life to come.

The second reflection of God was the moral nature of man. Every man, or almost every man, has in him a principle of right and truth far above his own practice and that of his fellow-men; but few of us make this better self the law of our lives.

He who will not allow his mind to be lowered to the standard of those around him; who retains his sense of right and wrong unimpaired amid all temptation; who asks himself, in all his actions, not what men will say of him, but what is the will of God—he may be truly said to bear in his life and character the Divine Image for our example. He may be some one who has sacrificed his earthly interests for the love of

truth; or who, with the world against him, has been compelled by a natural nobility of disposition to fight the battle of the alien and oppressed; or he may be one who, not knowing God, has sought to live in the ideal, that is, in His Image, above the commonplaces of the world, whether Christian or unchristian. All men are telling him, 'This is politic, this is expedient, this is what your party requires, this is what the Church or the world approves, this is the way to honour and preferment; these are the fashions of society, the customs of traders, the demands of nature, the received opinions of men, the necessities of the situation.' But he with unaverted eye thinks only of the good and true, having 'a faith and peace which no storm can shake'; and in all his life sees, like the prophet, the vision of God and his duty, high and lifted up above the mists of human error and the dark clouds of passion and prejudice, 'having the body of heaven in his clearness.'

This is a height of perfection to which a very few attain, and which will seem to some persons almost to have passed away from this earth. When our will is lost in His will, and our thought in His thought, and no earthly wish intrudes or offends, then, indeed, we may be said to be one with God, and God with us. And, even although this perfect image of God can hardly be formed in most of us, it is good for us to have such thoughts when receiving the Communion of the Lord's Supper, at our prayers, and at other

times. For there can never be any danger of our loving God too much, if we only think of Him as the God of justice and truth: if we seek to know Him first, and understand that all human knowledge is a manifestation of Him, there can be no fear of our becoming mystics.

And oh! that it were possible that this union of truth and love might be perfected, and that the highest intelligence of nature and of history might be combined with the highest devotion to His service. There have been some in this world who seem to have reached the utmost height of religious passion and devotion, who may almost be said to have been burnt up with the fire of divine love. But their conceptions of the character of God have been narrow and meagre; they have never thought of asking how He governed this world, or how they were to co-operate with Him. Their religion has been a principle of separation quite as much as of union, and they have tended to imagine that all which was not contained in the Scripture or taught by the Church was alien and antagonistic to them. There have been others, again, who have been animated by a sincere and disinterested love of truth, who have calmly surveyed the world and sought out and known all that could be known of nature and of man. But to them the Gospel of Christ has been a dead letter; they have never thought of human beings as needing to be restored, or of the world as a realm to be won back to the service of God. The

progress to which they devoted themselves was the progress of knowledge, not the moral or spiritual improvement of their fellow-men. Both have done a part of the work of God on earth, and both, probably, have lived in a state of mutual dislike and distrust of one another. But if ever there was a time when these two, the spirit of perfect love and of perfect knowledge, met together in the same person, or in many persons, then indeed we might have confidence that the Kingdom of God was about to appear amongst us, not coming with observation, but working silently, to be seen in the improvement of the conditions of the poor and labouring classes, in the greater harmony of different ranks of society, and in the renewal of our own lives.

IX

GOD JUST, LOVING, TRUE[1].

HE SHALL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

PSALM ix. 8.

GOD IS LOVE. 1 JOHN iv. 8.

HE THAT COMETH TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS, AND THAT HE IS A REWARDER OF THEM THAT DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM.

HEBREWS xi. 6.

THERE are some truths of religion which seem to retire from view, and others take their place and become the topics of the day. And the lesser often prevail over the greater, the uncertain over the certain, the temporal and accidental over the spiritual and universal. A curious interest is aroused about some matters of controversy, and there is hardly any interest about the first principles of all religion, which seem to drop out of people's minds as if they had nothing to do with revelation. And this neglect of all proportion in religious truth often leads to consequences quite at variance with the premises from which we started. Thus a sort of conflict appears to arise between faith and reason which is really due to an improper use of reason, drawing out inferences

[1] Preached at Balliol, April 20, 1884.

without considering the grounds of them, following not the truth but the tendencies of the human mind, turning rhetoric into logic, and building up probabilities when the limits of human knowledge have been attained, trusting to any fiction or illusion instead of looking facts boldly in the face or seeing things as they truly are.

One great instance will be enough to illustrate this curious tendency of the human race which has been the source of so much error in religion. He who reflects on the history of the Roman Catholic Church will feel quite amazed at the way in which one doctrine has been piled on another until the baseless fabric has been in a manner complete. The willingness of men to believe these doctrines, which is like the willingness of children to believe stories, has been accepted in the place of any real proof of them. And thus out of the words 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' has been developed the whole apparatus of Catholic theology, including the priesthood, purgatory, masses for the quick and dead, the infallibility of the Pope, the worship of the Virgin and her assumption into heaven, on to the new and strange dogma of the immaculate conception, which was first authoritatively sanctioned about twenty-nine years ago; and, once more, taking a new form, the infallibility of the Pope, not with, but without, a council, which was a short time ago affirmed by a great congress of the Catholic world. So the ball goes on rolling from age to age, like a snowball, and

perhaps like that some day to dissolve away. And beside this, in the development of these various doctrines distinctions have been introduced, and are so minute that the must be looked at through a microscope before they can be seen. A man may almost 'miss his salvation through an ignorance of grammar or logic.' I do not say this from any desire to attack our Roman Catholic brethren—the time for such controversies has passed—but because I believe that lessons may be learned from them which are applicable to ourselves. For not only Roman Catholics but all men everywhere are tending to put the ceremonial in the place of the moral, the word in the place of the thing, the local and temporal in the place of what is universal and eternal.

There is a sense of repose and also of security in leaving these disputes and antagonisms of theology, about which mankind are often so greatly excited, and turning to think a little of the greater first truths of religion, such as the love of God, or the justice and truth of God. These are anchors of the soul, sure and steadfast amid the waves of time; they are also measures and standards of our knowledge to which other truths may be referred or recalled. In thinking of them there is something of the feeling which the Psalmist expresses, 'Under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge, until this tyranny be overpast'; the words and opinions and violences of men are of little consequence while we have the

living consciousness that we are in the hands of a good and wise God. Neither is there any satisfaction in raising or ornamenting the superstructure unless we have the foundation, nor in believing in God if our conception of the divine nature is at variance with the sense of right in our own nature; nor in religion at all if religion is at war with morality.

Nor can we maintain that these greater and more simple truths are neglected because all men know them and are convinced of them. On the contrary, they seem to be the truths which are with the greatest difficulty realized in the world, by many not realized at all; and which are constantly in danger of becoming overclouded and obscured. Partly the perversity of the human intellect struggles against the simple notion of God; it is always returning to sense and seeking to veil the nature of God in figures of speech which imperceptibly lead us astray, or in figures of speech once removed, that is to say in analogies. And these veils have to be taken away if we are to see God as He truly is, and not merely as He is represented in the pictures of our minds. Or, if figures of speech are necessary (and indeed language seems to be made up of them), they should be the highest and purest that we can conceive, such as that in which God is described by the prophet 'as having the body of heaven in His clearness,' and not any chance images taken from the chaos of human sense. And when we have used such images we should also

learn to dispense with them and to see things as they truly are.

Suppose, now, we had a friend who was true and disinterested, one in whom there was no envy or jealousy or personal enmity, whose mind was always full of all noble feelings towards his friends, having a warmth of affection towards all of them alike, and ready to receive them as a father or an elder brother, willing ever to forgive them for wrongs against himself, yet also pained and grieved at them, not because they really did him any injury, but because of the ingratitude which they seemed to show; and because those who were guilty of them did harm, not to him, but to themselves. Also, I will suppose that this friend whom I am describing was the most generous of men, willing to give all that he had to others, to sacrifice himself for their good, kind even to the ungrateful and evil, and that he was the least ceremonious of men, requiring no etiquette or introduction, but freely admitting all who came to him. Such was his real character: but such was not the opinion which other men had of him; for they were cast in a meaner mould, and they could not understand his nobility and freedom of nature. Moreover, they had formed some strange misconceptions of him, and they fancied him not loving and gentle, but severe and precise, easily liable to take offence and not easily pacified when angry, conferring his favours, as some of them said, on a chosen few whom he selected with-

out regard to their characters, and insisting on their complying with certain conventional rules before he would receive them into his house. Now this misconception of his nature had continued for many years, how originating could hardly be determined; only one thing was certain, that it was due to no act or word of his, but rather to the stupidity or malignity of others.

Hear another parable. In a certain city there was a judge who was also a king; he was the wisest of judges and the greatest of kings. But the men of that city would not understand his greatness or his wisdom, and they imagined that he was just such an one as themselves. Now they were fond of legal disputes and artificial rules, and sometimes they decreed that men should live or die accordingly as they observed these rules of theirs; and if any one remonstrated with them they said no one could challenge their right to make any rules which they pleased, if they gave due notice of them; and that whether the criminal was a bad man or a good man that made no difference; the point to be considered was whether he conformed to their rules, and whether the rules had been duly announced to him. Also, there were many other things that they held, such as the distinction between themselves and strangers; and they said that they were under no engagement to do justice to strangers. The good and wise judge was grieved at their perverseness and folly, and above all at their attributing

to him their own corrupt notions of justice. For they pretended that his court, which was the great court of the realm, was governed by the same rules, although he had told them over and over again that he was no respecter of persons, and that 'he would reward every man according to his works,' and that 'in every nation he that did righteousness would be accepted of him.'

Once more: the kingdom of heaven is like a wise man seeking for pearls, and especially for one great and precious pearl, the pearl of truth. But the men of that country said that this pearl was not to be sought for everywhere and at all times; there were certain places, duly pointed out by the officers of the king who kept a guard, in which pearls might be taken. The pearls which were found elsewhere were declared by them not to be true pearls, and those who discovered them were desired to return them to the king's treasury, although this king himself had never given any such command. But his officers required that they should be issued over again under their authority—none others would pass current. And the wise man knew that he would never find the pearl of truth in this way, and accordingly he went to the king himself, and the king gave him permission freely to seek for the pearl of truth in the whole world, and whatever he found he was to show to his brethren. I venture to offer these three allegories as an introduction to the consideration of the nature of God

under three heads—'God is loving, God is just, God is true.'

First of all, God is loving. Human affection supplies many images of the love of God which tend to quicken and elevate our thoughts of Him. For He is our Father and we are His offspring; we look up to Him and recognize His authority; we converse and hold communion with Him in all that is best of our minds and of our lives; we may make a friend of Him, and may go to Him as a child would go to a parent to give him his confidence; even our faults are only seen by Him in the light of His love. Nor is our regard for Him any measure of His care for us: that may be observed in this world also; the love of the parent cannot be extinguished by the ingratitude of the child, but remains as a sort of pained love without any tincture of resentment to his life's end. How easily can we imagine the father or the mother coming out to meet their spendthrift son as he returns from a distant land, putting on him the best robe and making entertainment for him and his friends. That is the image by which the Gospel represents the love of God towards His prodigal ones. Once more, you may imagine a parent treating his child with great and deserved severity; commonly sending him to a schoolmaster to receive discipline and education: and in some cases he might be willing that the sentence of the law, imprisonment or some other penalty, might take effect upon him. But you cannot sup-

pose any one who has the natural feelings of a parent doing this except with a view to the good of his child, and in the hope of his improvement: the idea that he should suffer for the sake of suffering, if these words have any meaning, would be quite abhorrent to his mind. Even so (in the figurative language of Scripture) 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son in whom He delighteth.' But that He is delighted with the sufferings of any man is a doctrine that we had better give back to the heathen, or to the devil from whom it came. And the good and wise among the heathen also would have rejected such a doctrine; the evil, they would have said, of which God is the author must in some way issue in good. And when we hear of actions being attributed to God which are at variance with our conceptions of His goodness or His justice, then, even if it be in some sacred writing, the rule which has been laid down by one of the wisest of men might be usefully applied: 'Either these things never really happened, or they were not commanded by God.'

I have been representing divine love under the likeness of human love. And some one will perhaps say that 'His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts.' There are two senses in which these words may be applied; the one is very false, the other quite true. First, I will suppose a person saying, 'You use the terms loving and just and true; but how do you know that these words have any

meaning when you transfer them to God? For what is just to you may be unjust to Him, and what is true to you may be untrue to Him, and what is love according to your notions may be favouritism and partiality in His sight. Think of the ignorance of man and the limitations of human faculties, and do not profanely attribute your notions of morality to God.'

This is what I venture to think a wrong mode of reasoning about the divine nature, a sort of argument which overleaps itself, involving what has been well termed that terrible fiction of a double morality, one for God and another for man, which throws all our notions about God into confusion. For consider: if a person says, 'I know indeed and am assured of the existence of God and of His revelation to man; but that He is a wise God or a good God or a loving God, or indeed a moral God at all, of that I am not certain, because I do not know whether these words have any meaning in relation to God'; then he is in effect doing away with religion under the wish to be religious; he is like a person sitting on some main branch or limb of a great tree and sawing off the branch on which he is sitting. But instead of pursuing this controversy any further, I will rather proceed to show how the word 'love,' while retaining the same meaning in reference to God and man, may yet have a more perfect significance in reference to divine love than is possible in regard to mere earthly affection.

First, because earthly love is narrow and limited,

arising out of certain natural relationships or friendships formed by the accidents of time and place. But with God there are no accidents of time and place; His love is an equal love for all men in all ages and countries, a law of love which communicates with the hearts of men. Some one may say, 'What! am I not the special object of God's care? Am I not His favourite child? Will He not do for me what He would not do for another—save my life in an accident, or call me to repentance, when He allows another to perish?' No; that is not the nature of the divine love. Here is a real difference between His ways and our ways. Neither can you yourself desire that He shall do for you what He would not do for another. You have only to put yourself in the place of one who is rejected to see this. Even the human image may teach you a truer notion of God; for the father who has the feelings of a father does not select one of his children to the detriment of the rest; still less can we imagine that when His children are praying to Him that He would save them from death He would deliberately spare one and leave others to perish. Here is a real confusion of His ways and our ways, or rather perhaps a sort of narrowness of vision which makes us concentrate upon ourselves the universal care of all, a feebleness of intellect which fails to understand that the special providence which watches over each one is the general providence which watches over all.

But there is also another difference between love divine and love human, namely, that the love of God towards men is determined by the good and evil that is in them. People do not, and indeed cannot, choose their friends upon this principle; the elements of personal liking enter into friendship; and the best of men are not exempt from this, which seems to belong to the condition of our earthly state. But with God, as I was saying before in other words, there are no likes or dislikes; He is not a man that He should have a favour to one person rather than to another, or that His feelings should be confined to one rank or circle of society, or that He should take a friend and then give him up again because He found another more suitable to Him. For the love of God embraces all men everywhere and at all times, and 'has no variableness or shadow of turning': He can no more cease to be love than He can cease to be God. And His love extends even to the evil in one way, 'for he maketh His sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and giveth rain upon the just and the unjust': this is a part of His general laws which, when we speak of the divine hatred of evil, we must not forget. But, remembering this, and remembering also that His love to man is not in any case a merely personal feeling, then I say that this love is determined, not like the regard of one man for another, by individual attachment, but by the good and evil that is in them. Is a man doing His will in harmony

with His laws, carrying on His work in the world, seeking to regard other men as He regards them, casting away all earthly interests or pursuing them only as the means to that which is above them; then a man may indeed feel that he is living in God and God in him; he may consider that he has a Friend with him whose friendship can never fail; he may have a sort of consciousness of inspiration derived from Him in the performance of everything that is noble and true and good; he may rest in Him, and often when he is alone find himself not alone, because the Spirit of God is with him. And, as he feels the love of God diffused in the world around him, his love to man will also grow and enlarge—'I in them and thou in Me'—and 'whoso dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.' Did you ever hear that strange saying of the old mystic: 'The element of the bird is the air, the element of the fish is the sea, the element of the salamander is the fire, but the element of Jacob Behmen is the heart of God'?

Secondly, the equal love of God towards all men comes round to be the justice of God also. For these are not divided, as human language sometimes leads us to suppose. God is not loving with one part of His mind, and just with another, and true with another; nor loving at one time and just at another and true at another; nor loving to one person and in some of his dealings, and just to another person and in other of his dealings. But He is what He is everywhere and

at all times, and in reference to all things and persons whatsoever. These are but the imperfections of human language. And in religion as in other things we shall sometimes do well to get rid of language, or at least of the ordinary use of words, and take their meaning; we may try to express the same conception in other words, avoiding terms of controversy: then we shall more readily see what is essential and what is accidental in our ideas of religious truth.

But the justice of God, though inseparable from the love of God, has also another aspect. Neither must we forget that He is just when we speak of Him as loving, any more than that He is loving when we speak of Him as just. There is nothing that we do which is hidden from Him, nor can we suppose that our secret actions pass unheeded by Him. Like the inscription on some tablet, they remain; and the trace of them in our lives and characters is read by Him long after they are forgotten by us. And therefore this aspect of justice is full of awe to us. For which of us can imagine that he lives up to the standard which God requires of him, and which he himself also sees dimly and at a distance? Who among us is perfectly disinterested, regarding only duty and not interest, the will of God and not the opinions of men? Who, in the language of St. Paul, is 'dead to the world that he may live to God'? Which of us has made, or is truly making, this life a preparation for that other state, which, as we believe, is not far from

any one of us? Which of us can show that he has made the utmost of the pounds or talents entrusted to him? Even though we fully acknowledge that God knows all our circumstances, and that His judgement is relative to the very condition of our bodily frame, to the place in the world which He has given us, and to our means of knowledge and improvement; still there is something terrible to us in this truth of the justice of God, and our ignorance of the manner in which this rule of divine justice is carried out tends to increase this terror: we may be confident that God is just, and yet 'who may abide the day of His coming?' Had we only thought of this a little sooner, while there was time! How natural and heartfelt is that saying, even to the bad man, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

But would you wish, because you are afraid of a righteous governor of the world, to be under an unrighteous one? That be far from us; no rational being would desire that. Nor would any rational being seek to avoid that state of trial or discipline which would most conduce to his improvement, even though the process of restoration to God might be a 'piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.' Nor would any rational being wish to continue for ever in his present imperfect state. And therefore, in thinking of another life, we rejoice with trembling. For we cannot tell how

far we are fitted for that other state to which God is calling us; nor can we easily set any limit to the natural consequences of evil, for they are worse, if we had any true notion of them, than those physical images of burning and torture which we sometimes see in pictures. 'Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell.' We do not need to place before the mind's eye those outward representations of rivers of flame, and vast chasms, and murderers calling to their victims, which we find in Plato and other Gentile writers. A truer image is supplied by that of St. Paul, the soul perpetually crying to herself, and saying, 'O wretched—who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

And here arises a thought which kindles a fire within us, which at least makes us speak out and ask the question: Is the justice of God reconcilable with the everlasting damnation of a portion of His creatures? Are the lost to suffer never-ending torments as the penalty of carelessness or worldliness, or even of greater and deeper sins of which they have been guilty during their short space of three score years and ten? And is the fixing of their eternal destiny to depend in some cases on the hazard of an accident, the overturning of a railway carriage, the process of a mortal disease, the expression of some few words on a deathbed? Tell me how all this is to be reconciled with the notion of a just and perfect God. My brethren, I am not concerned to answer

these sort of objections. There is nothing wrong in such feelings, so far as they express not any laxity about sin and evil, but a jealous desire to vindicate above all things the justice of God. I think, however, that another way of stating this subject might perhaps satisfy these natural feelings. Let us not speak of an infinite punishment for a finite sin. Neither, on the other hand, let us assume that a time will come in the course of ages when every man will be restored to the grace and favour of God. For, although God may have provided ways of which we are ignorant 'that His banished ones be not expelled from Him,' yet this lies beyond the horizon of our vision, and may give rise to a great misconception. But let us rather say that God 'will reward every man according to his works,' and that the punishment of mankind in another world will be perfectly just because inflicted by God; the least evil that we do shall not be without consequences, the least good not wholly unrewarded. That may lead us to feel comfort, and also terror and awe. For if, on the one hand, we feel that none can abide the severity of God's judgement, we feel also that it is good for us to fall into the hands of God: when we consider how little we know of another world, there would be no truth in attempting altogether to banish fear. Neither need any one apprehend that the strong sense of the justice of God will tend to any laxity of morals. It is a maxim of human law that the most effectual punishment is that which

is most duly proportioned to the crime. This is illustrated by the difficulty of obtaining a conviction or executing a penalty when the punishment is too great for the offence. Human nature revolts at it. Neither is the divine penalty really more terrible because supposed to be infinite. For this is only vague and unreal, a penalty which no one applies to himself, and to which the heart and conscience bear no witness. But still there is a comfort in feeling that we are in the hands of God; we do not seek to avoid just punishment, and He will not suffer us to be punished above what we deserve. For 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' will His judgement fall short of the simple rules of human justice? Nay, surely, He will not fall short of this; He will exceed it. Neither will His justice depend upon accidents; neither will He 'take me at a catch,' as has been roughly but truly said; nor will He divide men into two classes only where there are many classes, or rather infinite degrees of them. Nor will He judge them by any narrow or technical rules, but by the broad principles of right and wrong. Slowly in the course of ages mankind have shaken off superstitions about God, and learned the simple truth that God is just, which seems to be the beginning of religion, and yet is hardly understood even now in all its fullness. There is probably no one in this church, father, mother, or any one else, who could for a moment tolerate the idea that an unbaptized infant would suffer

everlasting torments. Remember that this was once the faith of nearly the whole Christian world, and ask yourself whether, in these latter days, which are sometimes supposed to be rife with unbelief, Christians have not made some progress towards a truer conception of the ways of God to man.

Thirdly, as God is just He is also true; His justice is inseparable from His truth, just as His love is inseparable from His justice. 'Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar,' is the exclamation of the Apostle. 'Will ye speak wickedly for God and talk deceitfully for Him?' is the reproach of Job against the professors of religion. And everywhere, both in the Old and New Testament, the spirit of prophecy declares to us that God is true. Yet mankind in general, and especially perhaps religious men, have not recognized truth as an attribute of God in the same way that they recognize the justice of God or the love of God. They show this whenever they imply a distrust of the truth, or pervert the truth, or make oppositions of one truth and another, or set up their own opinions against facts. For if God is a God of truth, the truth is alone pleasing to Him; and truth of every kind, the truth of science as well as the truth of revelation, truths which were for ages unknown, truths which are at variance with the received opinions of men as much as those which are in accordance with them. For truth and knowledge are one even as He is one. Nor can He be pleased

at forced explanations or pious frauds, or any other shifts or evasions which are designed for His glory, nor at any oppositions of nature and revelation or of His laws and Himself. These are the ways in which men sometimes fancy they can do Him a service, not considering that He has no need of their falsehoods to support His truth, not considering, again, that there is no greater unfaithfulness than want of faith in the truth. Let them rather think that all truth and all inquiry is innocent to him who pursues them with an exact and humble mind, and that the Christian has a higher reason than other men for the conscientious pursuit of truth, for he knows that the God of truth is watching over his inquiries.

Lastly, my brethren, he who would understand the love or justice or truth of God must himself be loving and just and true. He who embraces his fellow-creatures in an ever-widening circle of love will begin to comprehend in a new way the infinite love of God to man, which embraces at once both him and them: in thinking of them he will think of God, in thinking of God he will think of them. He, again, who has a living sense of justice in his own actions will know of a certainty that God is just; not in any merely conventional way—that which is the first principle of his own life he will realize in the divine nature; trusting in God because He is just, as throughout his life, so also at the last hour. He will never fall into the faithlessness of supposing that God will do any-

thing to him or any other of His creatures at which human justice would revolt. Once more, he who has the love of truth in him will have a deeper knowledge of God and His laws, having God present with him in all his inquiries, and submitting to Him and acknowledging Him; rejoicing in all truth as of God, and learning to know Him, not according to the fancies of men, but as He is actually seen governing the world in a fixed order, and punishing His creatures for their good as the consequence of their actions, as He is revealed in history and science; and yet also recognizing Him as the light of the human heart, which is beyond history and science, which lights those who are ignorant of the very meaning of their words, and which can never be put out or extinguished either in this world or in another.

X

SPIRITUAL RELIGION NOT DEPENDENT ON SYSTEM [1].

THE HOUR COMETH, WHEN YE SHALL NEITHER IN THIS MOUNTAIN, NOR YET AT JERUSALEM, WORSHIP THE FATHER.

JOHN iv. 21.

THESE words have a revolutionary sound, and are startling in quiet times and to ordinary minds. Yet they do not stand alone in the Gospel, nor are they applicable only to the age in which Christ lived. There is a great deal more of the same language both in the Old and New Testament. When Christ says, 'My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight for it; but now is My kingdom not from hence,' He means substantially the same thing. He does not mean to say that His disciples were not to fight now, and that the time would come when they ought to fight (at the Crusades, for example); but that the Kingdom of God is spiritual, and founded on a belief that God is a Spirit. And when He speaks of His disciples as united with God and separated from

[1] Preached at Balliol.

the world ('I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one'), He is certainly not thinking of them as established in a church or united by a priesthood and common form of worship. He is taking another and a higher point of view: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them,' and 'Forbid him not; for there is no man that shall cast out devils in My Name that can lightly speak evil of Me.' And when men, as their manner is, are putting the outward in the place of the inward, the carnal body in the place of the spiritual body, like one grieved at their stupidity and hardness of heart, He says to them, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.' These are some of the revolutionary sayings of Christ. There are many others, such as those about the rich and the poor; about the Sabbath Day; about the temple; about the immediate coming of the Spirit. And if we pass from the New Testament to the Old we shall hear a similar voice speaking to us in the prophets. We have only to turn to the first chapter of the prophet Isaiah, there to read other words, unlike in form but like in meaning: 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the

oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.' Here indeed is a war against existing institutions, some of which were believed to have been sanctioned by God Himself. Here is a repetition of that lesson which, however old, is always needed in all ages and in all countries, the danger of putting the outward in the place of the inward, the local and temporal in the place of the spiritual and moral.

In this sermon I shall draw your attention to the tremendous import of the words of Christ, 'The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father,' and of other like words which occur elsewhere in Scripture. What is the meaning of them? Are they to be taken literally, and do they refer only or chiefly to the destruction of Jerusalem? Do they not rather express the prophetic feeling in all ages, which is not satisfied with the world or with the things of the world, whether secular or religious, and would fain rise above them and dwell with God only? And this seems to be the general character of the Gospel according to St. John. Such a spirit may be a source of disorder among men, and may also be the higher element of our lives. For we may abide in our appointed sphere and use the means which God has provided for us, and yet we may feel also how different life ought to be, how different religious and political institutions; how differently they must be regarded by God and man. There is some degree of difficulty

in reconciling these thoughts if they impress the mind strongly with the fulfilment of our daily duties. 'How unreal,' as people say, 'is all this!' And sometimes the thought works in our minds that this order of things 'cannot last; it is too hollow, too much undermined.' And yet the old order does not change, or changes very little, and, when the desired reform has been made, we are disappointed and find that the result has been less than we expected. The want, whether in politics or religion, lies deeper and cannot easily be satisfied. And long after we are in our graves, yea, perhaps to the end of time, another generation will feel as we do, as the prophets of old did, that our solemn things are unsatisfactory and unreal.

And first I shall venture to remark that the words of the text are not to be taken too literally. For some one may remind us that the smoke of the Samaritan Passover still ascends on Mount Gerizim, delighting the eyes of the English traveller with the living memorial of a former world, and that in Jerusalem, though often interrupted, the worship of the God of Abraham still continues; and, though the hope of the return of the Jews is never likely to be realized, some of the truest representatives of the religion and the race linger in the sacred city. But we need not perplex ourselves with this sort of literalism. For Christ is speaking generally, and is not careful to consider whether the words which He uttered in the

spirit of prophecy may not be contradicted at a future time by some isolated fact. In St. John's Gospel there occurs another passage breathing a similar spirit, not about the future but about the past, which has often troubled commentators and sometimes led them to a mistranslation of the original. Christ says, 'All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers;' yet surely neither He nor the recorder of His words (for I do not think we can clearly distinguish them) meant to imply that Isaiah and Jeremiah and the great prophets of old were thieves and robbers; nor can we maintain with some interpreters of the passage that 'before' means 'instead of,' and that 'All who ever came before Me' means 'All who ever came instead of Me.' Christ is not thinking of this application of His words and the past history of the Jews, but of false teachers and false prophets generally, and more especially of those who were living about His own time. The comparison of the passage which I have just quoted with the text throws some degree of light on both of them. And we may assume as a principle of all interpretation, and therefore of Scripture, that we must not introduce logic or require too literal an adherence to fact where the whole style and character of a writing shows that they have not been thought of. And the prophecies both of the Old and the New Testaments are to be taken in the spirit rather than in the letter; not as predictions of facts which may or may not have been verified at

a particular time, but as visions of nations appearing in the presence of God; as the revelation of the words and works of men in the light of a higher word; as a history of the world which is the judgement of the world.

The woman of Samaria to whom the words of the text are addressed, when she discovers that Christ is a prophet, is eager to make the most of her opportunity. She wants to have a resolution of the question, In what place ought men to worship? Was Jerusalem the accepted spot, or Mount Gerizim? Which passover was the most pleasing to God? How was the great dispute between Jews and Samaritans to be decided? Our Lord answers in words which there is some difficulty in explaining: 'Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.' He seems to mean that the Jews were more right than the Samaritans, perhaps because they had the prophets as well as the law, or because they had a real relation to those prophecies and to that history against which the Samaritans were a sort of rebels; at any rate, because they were as a fact better instructed in religion. But He at once leaves this point of view for a higher one, 'Neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain . . . for God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' To the question of the woman of Samaria He neither would nor could give an answer. For God was no respecter of places any

more than of persons. Men were not to say, 'Lo here! or, Lo there! for the Kingdom of God is within you.' And in a similar spirit, as you will remember, when they ask Him on another occasion, 'Where, Lord?' He only answers, 'Wheresoever the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.'

Let us try to imagine more precisely the feelings with which the words of the text were uttered by Christ. He saw the Jewish world everywhere sunk, not in idolatry, for that phase of religion had passed away, but in formalism, in ritualism, in ceremonial and puritanical observances, which were powerless to touch the heart of man or to purify his life. The Jewish law was not merely the uniting principle which bound men together in the worship of one God ('Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord'), but a dividing principle which separated them from the Samaritans and from the rest of mankind. The thought of the nature of God, of His justice, His truth, His goodness, had almost passed away, overloaded by a multitude of details, supplanted as the belief in God always is by men's belief in themselves, their Church, or their race. They go on saying, not in these exact words but in some other form of words which takes their place in another age, 'We have Abraham to our Father,' never considering that 'out of these stones God is able to raise up children unto Abraham,' and that 'many shall come from the East and from the West,' of no church or denomination,

some heathen philosopher, perhaps, or opponent of their own most cherished opinions, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the children of the kingdom may possibly be cast out. This word, 'We have Abraham to our father,' has excluded the sense or feeling of the Universal Father. And the temple made with hands, the consecrated church, the traditional spot to which pilgrimages were wont to be made, has obscured and narrowed the thought of Him who dwells not in houses made with hands, and is not contained in the furthest heaven, yet is pleased to take up His abode with us. That which was once a shadow of good things to come is not even a shadow of them now, but a veil, a mist, an impenetrable cloud, coming between us and God.

And sometimes the history of the past weighs upon mankind with an undue power. What was done three hundred or a thousand or sixteen hundred years ago has an effect upon us now, and often cannot be undone. A form of government or society or belief, to which we were not consenting parties, has been settled for us, and we feel that the individual mind is powerless to alter them. Our freedom seems to be impaired by them; in vain we desire something better and truer and more adapted to our wants. Then thoughts begin to arise in our minds that such a world as that in which we live will one day come to an end, that truth must prevail at last; and that the

fire which has hitherto slumbered in the earth will burst forth and burn up the chaff. Such volcanoes have really burst forth in the German Reformation or in the French Revolution. But for the most part they burn only in the hearts of men who say to themselves, 'O Lord, how long?' or 'The hour is coming,' at times seeming to think that the dawn is at hand. They turn away from the signs of decay and corruption which to their eye appears around them, and try to work out their individual life hidden with God and Christ. Many prophets have died unknown; they have desired to see things that they have not seen; they have closed their eyes on a world which was receding from them; they have found that the vision of the Kingdom of God was to be realized, perhaps on earth in the course of ages, but chiefly in themselves, and in another state of being.

Thus the words of Christ find a sort of reflection or analogy in our own day, and in the thoughts and lives of a few persons who have a feeling for the world around them. They should be considered further in connexion with the general character of the Gospel according to St. John; for the character of that narrative is not historical, but spiritual, not descriptive of the outward forms of the Church, but of the inner life of the soul. It hardly ever touches upon the relation of believers to the external world or to society, but only upon their relations to God and Christ. They are withdrawn from the world that

they may be one with the Father and with the Son; they eat the bread of life; they drink the water of life; they receive another spirit which is to guide them into all truth. They are not, as in the parable, like the wheat growing together with the tares; nor do they become a great tree under the shadow of which the birds of the air take shelter: they are the branches indeed of which Christ is the Vine, but no outward glory or power is attributed to them. Nor are they bound together by a common external symbol; for, as you will remember, the institution of the Sacrament is not recorded in the Gospel of St. John. Many reasons have been given for the omission; the author of the fourth Gospel has been sometimes supposed to have avoided subjects which were mentioned in the three first. But there is no proof that he was acquainted with them; the more probable reason is, if any is needed, that he is putting forward another aspect of the life of Christ, and that the outward fades away before his mind in comparison with the inward. Christ is not described in the Gospel of St. John as instituting the Sacrament of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, but as teaching men that He is the Bread of Life. And, if we look closely at the external events recorded, we shall see that they are told for the sake of some lesson or discourse which is appended to them, rather than for the sake of the events themselves. The miracles are very few; one class of them, that of healing the demoniacs, is omitted. For

example, the miracle of the five thousand is narrated in the three first Gospels chiefly as a wonder, but in the fourth Gospel with a manifest reference to the lesson which follows concerning 'the bread of life.'

Returning, then, to the words of the text, and reading them in the light of other passages in the Gospel, I think that we are right in regarding chiefly, or indeed exclusively, their spiritual import. Whether our Lord, or the recorder of His words, did intend to allude to the times of trouble and desolation which were shortly, that is about forty years afterwards, coming upon Jerusalem, we cannot precisely determine. But what He chiefly meant to express was an eternal truth and not a particular fact. As when He says 'the hour is coming, and now is, when all they that are in the graves shall hear His voice,' He is speaking of a future which is already present, and anticipated in all ages by the consciences of men passing judgement on themselves and their own times. For when we compare our external institutions with the language of prophecy respecting the Church, or our own lives with the requirements of a divine law, we feel that they cannot stand, and we desire sometimes with a longing past expression to become other than we are. For we know, as Christ says, that religion is spiritual, and consists in communion with the justice and truth and goodness of God. But we are living the life of all men, worshipping in a cold and formal manner; repeating words to which

we hardly attend; instead of making our whole lives a worship of Him, and seeking to enter into His mind and to do His work.

Nor need we hesitate to apply the words of the text to some of the forms of religion which we see around us. 'The hour is coming when neither as Protestants nor as Catholics, neither as Churchmen nor Dissenters, shall men worship the Father.' For a feeling of dissatisfaction will sometimes steal over us at the disputes of our Churches, at the unreality of our preaching, at the unchristian appearance of a Christian country. When we see religious opinion moving strongly in one direction during the last generation, and in entirely different currents among our own contemporaries, and our forms of worship are so much changed that our fathers or grandfathers, if they could return to life again, would view them with extreme dislike, we feel we cannot trust the opinions of men; they come and go, and are phases only, shadows of the past, which revive from time to time and are followed by reaction. We do not wish to live and die in them, for they may fail us when they are most wanted. Neither do we desire to be like chameleons, changing colour from year to year; or to catch the epidemic of religion which happens to be in the air; or to have one half of our lives or of our minds saying Aye and the other No to the same truths ('Aye and No are no good divinity'). But we desire to have the peaceful and harmonious growth of

religion in the soul, which becomes a part of our being, and is not shaken by the accidents of public opinion or the discoveries of science, or the satire of society and the world; which is the same in all ages, and is inseparably bound up with goodness and truth everywhere. For when we find that the world is changing around us, and some things that were once most certain to us are becoming doubtful, then is the time to go back to the simple principles of religion, and not allow them to be interfered with or dethroned by the externals which are always taking their place. 'To do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God'; 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness'; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself'; 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord': these are the primary principles of religion which can never alter or be superseded; and they are so simple that they can hardly fail to be understood. But, when I proceed to think of churches, of forms of worship, of systems of theology, these vary with the philosophy of different ages, or the characters of individuals; they are not ends but means in religion, and they have given occasion to endless disputes. Yet not because I see that many things which I once deemed to be revealed truths are relative and transient, and that many things which I once deemed characteristic of Christianity are common to other religions, will I give up the faith in God and

immortality, or the desire to be a follower of Christ. Hence the importance of not putting the lesser before the greater, the changing before the unchanging, the duty of worshipping at Jerusalem once a year before the great truth that God is a Spirit. I worship God in this consecrated building where there are sounds of music and stained windows, and the architecture of a former age is pleasingly imitated; but if I were on a desert island could I not worship Him still, and perhaps more truly, for there He would be my only hope? And if of the temple of Jerusalem not one stone were left upon another, or if the Churches of Christ in this and other countries were overthrown, should I therefore renounce my belief in Him? Yes, perhaps so, if my belief had been in houses made with hands; but not if I had considered that churches too partook of human infirmity even more than political institutions, and that the truth or word of God, and not the vessel which contained the truth, is the foundation upon which human life must be reared.

When, applying the words of Christ to our own times, we say, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when there shall be neither Catholics nor Protestants, Churchmen nor Dissenters,' we do not suppose that these well-known names will cease among us, or that the things signified by them will altogether disappear. But they may become unimportant in comparison with the great truth 'God is a Spirit.' For

the more the spiritual character of religion is understood the more external differences will disappear. Can we think of a good man as other than a good man because he belongs to another sect, because he does not believe in the same doctrines which we believe in? Hardly, if we know him; but ignorance is the parent of dislike and estrangement. When we read history we see that these differences have originated in feelings which we no longer share, and which are maintained chiefly by external barriers. And, when we turn from the ecclesiastical history of our own country and of Europe to the larger book of the religions of the world, we perceive that the disputes which have occasioned them are infinitely small in comparison with the greater interests of religion, and we wonder how the human mind can have been absorbed by them. Or again, when we look out on 'the heavens, the work of Thy hands, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained,' are not these religious disputes calmed and silenced in the thought, 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?' And when we think of God as a Spirit, must not this great truth absorb the lesser antagonisms or parties which divide us? Just as in politics we have seen towns or districts of the same country which seemed to bear an external enmity to one another, the heritage of former ages, yet contrary to all expectations have been fused or moulded into a single nation and become instinct with a common life. There is Italy, for example,

and Germany. And are the divisions of churches to be more lasting than the divisions of nations?

These may seem to be unsettling thoughts, and I ventured to speak of the text as one of the revolutionary sayings of Christ. For we must provide for the religion of the next generation as well as of this, for our whole lives and not merely for the phase of opinion which prevails at the present moment. It is certainly an unsettling thing to try to live in another world as well as this, to want to fly when we are compelled to walk upon the earth. Yet most of the good which has been accomplished among men is due to aspirations of this sort. We may be in the world and not of it, and we may be in the Church and far from agreeing in the temper and spirit of many Churchmen. Difficulties may surround our path to some extent. But, if there is no difficulty in ourselves, these may generally be overcome by common prudence. The aspirations after a higher state of life than that in which we live may in a measure fulfil themselves. We may create that which we seek after. And although there will always remain something more to be done, and our thoughts will easily outrun our utmost exertions, yet we may find in such thoughts of the changes which may come over the world and the Church not an unquiet or disturbing element of our lives but a sense of repose; they may enable us to see whither we are going, and we may have a satisfaction in contributing to the work which God intended us to do.

And, if at this time, or at any time, great changes may be expected in the opinions of men about the Church, about the Bible, or about political institutions, as some persons tell us, whether truly or not, there is clearly a reason why we should seek other principles which cannot be shaken. A great work it is for a man to build up his own life with all the helps of companionship and common worship under the guidance and authority of the past. But there may also be a more difficult work reserved to some of us, that we should build up our lives looking not to the past but to the future, thinking of the world which will be twenty or thirty years hence, which some of us will not be here to see, when many opinions which are now new will have become old, and some institutions which are now powerful will have passed away. He who lives not hanging on the past but aspiring towards the future may accomplish a great work in his day. For such a life he might find an example in the Jewish prophets, if not in ecclesiastics of a later age. His leaf would not wither when he grew old, for he would be coming near to his goal. And, though he is not likely to have seen all that he desired accomplished, yet at his death he would have the consciousness that he had made the most of his life. He had done his work and was ready to depart.

But, as when we indulge in these distant visions of the future, whether in religion or politics, we are always liable to be led away by some Will-o'-the-

wisp, propounding to ourselves some distant ends, and never thinking of the means, I will add in conclusion a very few remarks touching the manner in which these great ambitions or aspirations may be made effectual or practical. The way to the future lies along the present: and we can only act upon another generation by thoroughly understanding our own; what we can do for others depending upon what we are or make ourselves. We cannot assume a force of character which we have not; we cannot have the results of education or preparation if we have not educated or prepared ourselves. Dreams of Christian or social improvement are easy, but if we do not try to realize them they will be positive hindrances in the way of our own improvement. And therefore with all such aspirations I would inseparably link the maxim 'Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.'

And, if any one says 'I do not understand these great aims or grandiloquent thoughts about the next generation and the like, I wish only to do my duty as the clergyman of a country parish, to be honest as a tradesman, or to bring up a family in the fear of God,' still I would ask him or her sometimes to consider this world twenty-five or thirty years hence. What would he have wished to have been doing now if his life is extended into the next generation? The calm *résumé* of a man's present life in the light of twenty-five years hence would have a sobering and strengthening

influence on him. He would make a plan for many years instead of living from year to year. He would be able to deal with life in a larger and more liberal spirit. He would think more of its permanent and less of its transient element. He could not be very much the slave of party or prejudices, for he would acknowledge that the same parties and prejudices would hardly exist twenty-five years hence. There are some possibilities for which he would allow, and one of these would be the uncertainty of his own life. And he would not walk the less by faith because he carefully considered what one year might add to another, how difficulties which could not be overcome in a short time might be surmounted in a long time. There is no higher faith in this world than to live for posterity, and to think sometimes of the good which we may do to a generation whom we shall never know and who can do nothing for us. The believer in Christ should cherish in himself and impart to others the hope and promise of the future, not only in the life which is to come, but also in that which now is.

And, lastly, there is of course a sense in which the words of the text are applicable to all of us: 'The hour is coming when neither in this church nor in any other shall we worship God'; for our short span of life will be over, and we and our actions and our worldly or religious interests will have passed out of the memory of man into the presence of God. Let

us try to think of men and things as they will then be regarded by us, when the outward and visible will have faded away, and theological controversies have no longer any meaning to us. Let us try to think of our own lives as they will appear before Him when the fashions and opinions of this world are nothing to us, and we measure ourselves, not by the opinions of men, but by the just judgement of God.

XI

CHRIST'S UNITY WITH THE FATHER[1].

JESUS ANSWERED THEM, AND SAID, MY DOCTRINE IS NOT MINE, BUT HIS THAT SENT ME. IF ANY MAN IS WILLING TO DO HIS WILL, HE SHALL KNOW OF THE DOCTRINE, WHETHER IT BE OF GOD, OR WHETHER I SPEAK OF MYSELF. HE THAT SPEAKETH OF HIMSELF SEEKETH HIS OWN GLORY: BUT HE THAT SEEKETH HIS GLORY THAT SENT HIM, THE SAME IS TRUE, AND THERE IS NO UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN HIM.

St. John vii. 16–18.

In the Gospel according to St. John the Jews are constantly asking questions respecting the claim of Christ to be regarded as the Son of God. They require of Him a sign from heaven; and sometimes He answers them in enigmatical language: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again': or, 'I, if I be lifted up from this earth, will draw all men after me': or, 'Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread.' Sometimes He appeals to the prophets who wrote of Him and foretold the darkness which would come over the eyes and hearts of the Jewish people;

[1] Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, Oct. 22, 1882.

or again, to the witness of John the Baptist, who had himself been asked similar questions by the priests and Levites sent from Jerusalem. They have strong reasons for doubting the truth of His mission: 'Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet'; or, 'Howbeit we know this Man whence He is.' Sometimes in a more natural strain they argue: 'Is not this the carpenter's Son, whose father and mother we know?' For mankind are slow to recognize the greatness of those with whom they have been long familiar; as Jesus Himself testified, 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own country.' Then, again, they are puzzled by His words, they do not understand in what sense He bears record of Himself; and they seem to taunt Him with a forgetfulness of His own profession, that His Father bore witness of Him. They do not comprehend how He can be the judge of the world, and yet not the judge of the world; or how they should seek Him and not find Him, and 'whither I go ye cannot come'; any more than Pilate understood the word of Christ that 'He was a king'; or that 'He came into the world to bear witness unto the truth.' His inmost and deepest thoughts, 'Before Abraham was I am,' and 'I and the Father are One,' appeared to them to be blasphemy. They were offended at His breaking the law about the Sabbath day, according to their narrow interpretation of it. They failed altogether to see His meaning when He told them that they 'must be made free,' or 'must be

born again,' or 'must eat His flesh and drink His blood.' Some of them wondered, 'How He could know letters, not having learned.' Some said, 'He is a good man,' and others, 'Nay, but He deceiveth the people.' And 'neither did His brethren believe in Him.' They wanted Him to show forth His claims to the world, saying, shrewdly enough, 'There is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly.' If He would only make a speech, or assert Himself in some way, then the world would acknowledge Him. And they also reminded Him that He was running a risk of being stoned if He went up to Jerusalem. To whom Christ, in the deep stillness of His convictions, only replies, 'My time is not yet; your time is always ready'; and, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world': how much more he who sees always the light of the divine presence!

Even the inner circle of His disciples seem to have found a difficulty in understanding His language and character. They knew that some great and mysterious calamity was hanging over Him and them. But they could not tell what He meant when He said: 'Yet a little while, and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.' They wanted Him to 'show them the Father, and they would be satisfied,' not understanding that in Him only would they see the Father. They knew

not whither He went, and how could they know the way? They had no conception of a kingdom not of this world; they had rather hoped that He should restore to the Jewish people their own kingdom, and even that some of themselves might be sitting on His right hand and His left, judging the tribes of Israel. They were the personal friends of Christ who were ready to follow Him whithersoever He went, and like friends they were anxious about His safety; they were comforted by His presence, they were conscious that He had the words of eternal life. But of His inner mind, of His real nature, of His relation to the Father, of the purely spiritual mission which He came into the world to accomplish, they seem hardly to have had a conception. They were ordinary men who had no outlook into the world or into history, and who had not yet been transfigured by the power of His character. So the author of the fourth Gospel, which of all the Gospels and of all the books of Scripture is by far the most dramatic, in his own lively manner has pictured to us the feelings which filled the minds, not of the Jews only, but of the first disciples.

And so in later ages and on many grounds, sometimes lighter, sometimes more serious, men have had their searchings of heart respecting 'the way, the truth, and the life.' For not only in His own day was Christ misunderstood, but in all ages there have been those who have put the letter in the place of the

spirit, and have perverted what was inward and moral into what was local and outward. Either they have found difficulties in the ancient narrative of the Gospels, which they have vainly endeavoured to meet by pretended reconcilements; or they have wanted to see with their own eyes the miracles of which they have heard by distant report; or they have hoped against hope to witness the Son of Man appearing in the clouds of heaven; or they have formed within the bosom of the Christian Church narrow sects more nearly resembling in externals the congregations of the first believers, until the very conception of the Gospel has vanished into a many-coloured dream, and the truth which was to be the life of man has taken the form of an answer to objections, an apology, a defence, a book of evidences; not the highest and the holiest which the human mind could conceive, a self-evident truth or light, but a full-blown system of theology, and a vigorous polemic against opponents. For the religion of Christ is always being recovered and being lost; and errors, falsehoods, superstitious practices, which He came into the world to destroy, are constantly being reasserted in His name. The men of our own day are not so unlike as we imagine to the contemporaries of Christ; and the difficulties of our own age resemble, in a measure, those difficulties which the Evangelist has put into the mouths of the Jews. Slowly, if at all, do men realize that Christianity is not a church, or a congregation, or a history,

or a book, but a blessed and divine life, or communion of men with God, of which he who wills may be a partaker. They have never applied to their own case the passionate exclamation of Christ, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.' If we allow for differences of times and countries, and also for the length of time during which the objections to the Gospels and the answers to them have been accumulating (for the evidences of Christianity have become a great literature), we may fairly argue from one age to the other, or at any rate find in the one the germs of true and useful thoughts which are applicable to the other. Following on the lines indicated by the words of the text, I propose to consider more particularly—(1) the nature of Christ's answer to the Jews; (2) what did He mean when He said 'If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine'? (3) what application of these and similar words we may make to ourselves and to our own day.

First of all our Lord appeals to Himself. There is a true witness which a man may give of his own life and actions, and there is a false witness by which he deceives first himself and then others; and lastly, there is a witness, partly true and partly false, by which he perplexes his fellow men, because they see the high and lofty aims which animate him, but they also see that he is the victim of a delusion. The

record which is true appeals irresistibly to our highest sense of right and truth; there are a few whose goodness we could hardly doubt without at the same time doubting the existence of goodness itself. The false record is that of an impostor, who is also a fanatic, who can offer no reasonable ground why men should believe him to be sent of God, but yet by a certain positiveness and egotism, by an intense belief in himself, gains an ascendency over the minds of others. And there have been leaders of religious thought, who have been deceived as well as deceivers, who with good intentions have not been aware how much of their own teaching was derived, not from God, but from themselves. Characters of this type are common among men, and they often gain an undue power over their fellows; they insensibly undermine the truth and purity of religion, and create a distrust of it in the world. There have been even saints and righteous men whose witness of themselves was not to be believed; they thought they saw, and perhaps really saw, the true light at times; and at other times they supplemented by self-delusion the faith which was beginning to fail them; and yet they have been good men still in the main, if all the circumstances of their lives be considered. Nevertheless it is obvious that their testimony of themselves must be received with suspicion; for they and their beliefs were what they made them by fastings and religious exercises, by a study of one side of the truth only, by indulging

the natural tendency of their minds; or, what they had become by the opposition and antagonism of their age, by the cruelty and persecution of their enemies.

The true witness which a man bears of himself is not positive, not egotistical, not polemical; it is humble, calm, retiring; not what a man proclaims of himself, but what his life and character say of him. His acts are the witness of his words; he himself is the witness of the spirit in which he acts. If you would test a good religious teacher, try him especially in those points in which he is most likely to fail. Is he disinterested, or seeking for his own glory? Is he a lover of all men everywhere, or only of his own sect? Are his ideas of right and truth in politics and religion dependent on the interests of Church or dissent? Is he as careful of means as he is of ends; or is he apt to think that the end sanctifies the means? Is he really living above the world, in communion with God, in love and harmony with his fellow men? There is no difficulty in distinguishing the religion of such an one from the conventional imitation of it; from the ecclesiastical religion which seeks only to exalt the power of the priesthood; from the puritanical religion which would bind up salvation in a theological formula; from the interested and Pharisaical religion which desires to appear well in the eyes of men; from the political religion which converts the words of Christ into the symbols of a party.

In answer to the questions of the Jews, our Lord appeals to the purity and disinterestedness of His own character—'No man convinced Him of sin,' and, 'if He said what they felt in their hearts to be the truth, why did they not believe in Him?' What motive had He for deceiving them? He came not seeking His own glory, but to reveal the Father in Him and them. He did not want the praise of men, but only that they should come to Him and have life. He had done the works of God; that was the proof that He was one with God. The Scriptures, too, of the Old Testament, whenever they spoke of mercy and judgement, of the Son and Servant of God, of the love of Jehovah to His people, were fulfilled in Him who first felt for Himself, and taught mankind to feel, that God was their Father and His Father, and their God and His God. To Him John the Baptist, to Him the prophets witness, to Him all good men everywhere who have a like spirit in them. Goodness and truth recognize Him who is good and true as naturally as the eye catches the light of the sun. Not only the life of Christ, but the life of His humblest followers, the poor man or woman dying in a cottage or workhouse of a lingering disease, do sometimes, by their humility, by their resignation, by their elevation above the things of this world, give a testimony of the truth of religion which strikes home to our hearts.

But Christ has a greater witness than the witness of men. He feels that God is His witness. Without

God He could not have lived such a life, or died such a death. To those who say, 'Show us the Father and it sufficeth us,' He only replies, 'I am the manifestation of the Father.' Righteousness witnesses to itself, but it has also the witness of God. The Jews said, 'This is blasphemy'; and so it was for Simon Magus, or any other false prophet who had no truth in him, to declare that he was the 'great power of God.' But it was not blasphemy for Christ, feeling in His whole soul the love of God, the truth of God, the righteousness of God, feeling that in all His words, works, thoughts, He was reflecting the will of God, to declare Himself one with God. The creed tells us that He was 'equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.' But is it not more intelligible to us, and more instructive, to think of Him as one with God, because Christ and God are one with righteousness and truth? Christ does not so much assume to be God as He naturally loses Himself in God. Other leaders and teachers of mankind have been remarkable for confidence in themselves, and this quality is sometimes thought to be characteristic of great men. The confidence of Christ is of another sort, not confidence in self, but absolute dependence on the will of God. He has no fear, except once and for a moment, lest He should be forsaken of God; He has no wish or desire except that which is inspired in Him from above. He is not making an effort, or striving to

produce an impression on His own disciples or the Jewish people, but simply appearing as He was, and showing men the truth which He had received from God. The depth and calmness of His nature are not ruffled by the violence of the multitude; He still pleads for them, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' To the Roman governor and in the face of death He continued to announce His mission: 'For this cause was I born, and to this end came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth.' He has nothing to do with the world, or the kingdoms of the world, or the policy of Caiaphas, or the rival sects of the Jews. The scene which surrounds Him, whether of the feast in the temple or before the judgement seat or on the cross, passes unheeded before His eyes. In the midst of the crowd He is alone with God.

This is the witness which Christ gives us of Himself, the visible embodiment of His righteousness in a person who is holding communion with God. Some of us may have felt ourselves at certain times of our lives falling under the influence of a good man who has inspired us with thoughts which we never had before, who has spoken to us of our duty to God and man, of living for others, of giving up the world, of disinterestedness, of self-sacrifice. Why did we believe him or listen to him? Because his character seemed to witness to his words; what he said, he was; because the lesson that he taught flowed at

once and immediately out of his own nature. We might have a doubt whether we could make the sacrifice which he demanded of us, whether we could resist temptation, whether having begun to lead a new life we should not after a time fall away. But we should have no doubt that he was speaking the truth, that he was calling upon us to fulfil the work of God, that if we would receive his words we should be happier than if we neglected them. Even if the impression faded away we should acknowledge that he was right, and we should perhaps feel grateful to him in after life for having sought to save us from sin and evil. This, which may have come within the experience of many of us, is an illustration of the manner in which Christ spoke and taught, Himself His own witness. And the persons whom I have been describing are like Christ in their own spheres, showing the nature of God in themselves, reflecting the life of Christ in their own lives; they are witnesses who need no other witness of the truth of their words. And, if in remote ages, amid new forms of society and new interests of knowledge, the image of Christ begins to wax dim, it can only be renewed by the lives of men like Him, devoting themselves to the cause of God and to the good of their fellow men, in an altered world, after another manner perhaps (for we cannot anticipate religious any more than political changes), yet in the same spirit of holiness and disinterestedness and truth.

Once more, our Lord implies that the willingness to receive the truth depends upon the disposition of the hearer—'Whoso willeth to do His will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' He who hungers and thirsts after goodness and truth shall not be long in doubt about their true nature, for God will reveal them to him. He who is seeking for the light will not be left in the darkness. To him who is saying, 'Who is the Lord that I may believe on Him?' Christ will appear, whether in the form of a person or not in the form of a person, whether in a Christian country or not in a Christian country, whether in the words of the Gospel or not in the words of the Gospel. For we are a long way off that revelation of God which Christ made to His disciples; we see Him at a distance only; and there may be some who do not bear His name and yet are partakers of His spirit; and others, again, in so-called heathen countries who speak of truth and righteousness in other language than that of the New Testament; who have known Christ and have not known Him, in the spirit and not in the letter. And the more we enlarge the meaning of His words so as to include those sheep of another fold, those Christians in unconsciousness as they may be termed, the more truly do we enter into the mind of Christ.

Such a rule as that of the text obviously implies that religion is very simple, not a complicated or scientific system dependent on criticism or on

examination of evidence, or adapted to the latest discoveries in philosophy. Christ does not say that he who wills to do the will of God shall know what is the true reading, or what is the interpretation of a passage of the New Testament, or whether the facts of His own life have been accurately narrated in the Gospels, or whether this or that doctrine has been rightly defined by the councils of the Church. Of such matters there is no spiritual intuition; the Scriptures must be interpreted like any other book, according to the same laws of language and the same rules of criticism and evidence. Neither does He seem to say 'Be humble and believe what you are told by the ministers of the Gospel'; nor again, 'Follow some religious practice until you are convinced of the belief on which your practice rests'; nor 'Admit the claims of some religious teacher, and you will soon know him to be inspired.' These are erroneous ways of applying the meaning of the text. But He means to say that, if you have a real desire after truth and holiness and righteousness, you shall know what they are, and shall be in no danger of being deceived about them. If you begin by seeking to do the will of God, more and more of His will shall be revealed to you. You shall see Him as He is, not disfigured by the traditions of men; and His grace shall be perfected in you.

And now I will proceed to consider, in the last place, how the words of the text may be applied to

ourselves, and to our own times. There appears to be in the minds of many persons a good deal of apprehension about the future of religion. These alarms which have been always felt in all ages of the Church seem in our own day to have increased, and perhaps with some reason. We see powerful influences at work and rapid changes taking place, and we cannot pretend to foretell what will be the course of religious opinion in this or other countries fifty or even twenty years hence. Not only the speculative reconcilement of science and religion appears to be distant, but the practical reconcilement of them in our own life and conduct is not free from difficulty. For we are subject to opposite and discordant influences; we hear one voice speaking to us in the churches and another in the newspapers or the lecture-room. And some persons have thought that they would be quit of the difficulty by being quit of religion; they have gone further and further away from the faith of their fathers, putting the world in the place of God, the laws of nature in the place of moral and spiritual truths. Yet, perhaps, we should not attach too much importance to such changes; for there are some who, in the days of their youth, have lightly laid aside all regard to religion, and have died in the bosom of an infallible church. And there are others who have gone to the opposite pole, and then in middle life they have found the articles of belief which they had eagerly embraced in youth slipping from under them,

and their life has set in darkness and doubt. There have been times in the history of the Church when the true meaning of the Gospel seemed to be almost lost; when, in the beautiful words of the great Catholic historian, 'Christ was in the ship, but asleep'; and to these times of lethargy and vacancy have succeeded other times of revival, awakening, reformation, counter-reformation. Therefore we should look forward in faith to the future, and not be too much influenced by the accidents of the age in which we live—the state of knowledge, the progress of criticism, the conflict of ideas and modes of thinking. Human nature has been so created by God as to be sufficient for itself under all its trials. The world is moving on fast; ideas which are in the air trouble our minds; at times they seem quite to overpower us; and we want to know where, amid the floating sands of opinion, we may find some rock or anchor of the soul.

Is not the answer the same as of old, 'The things which are shaken are being removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain'? The law of duty, the standards of morality, the relations of family life are unchanged. No one can truly say that he is uncertain about right and wrong. 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' The answer is the same as it always was, 'Even by ruling himself after Thy word.' The nature of true religion is not altered in the latter half of the nineteenth century. 'To do

justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God'; 'to visit the fatherless and widow, to keep himself unspotted from the world'; to live always 'as unto the Lord, and not unto men'; 'to be kindly affectioned one to another'; to 'take up the cross and follow Christ' (if we are capable of it): which of these precepts is changed by the inquiries of criticism? Which of them does not come home to us, not only as a word of the New Testament, but as a self-evident duty or truth?

And, if there are difficulties which the progress of the nineteenth century has introduced into religion, we should also remark that of many things we have a clearer knowledge than our fathers; we have surely a truer perception of the spirit of Christ than in the days of party and persecution; the proportions of religious truth are better understood by us, and we see that the points in which we differ are far less important than those in which all men, or almost all men, are agreed; we have learned that a Christian life comes before definitions of Christian truth; if we do not doubt about the one, neither need we doubt about the other; for the truth is the reflection of the life, as Christ also implies when He calls Himself 'the way, and the truth, and the life.' There are many ancient misunderstandings between good men of different forms of religion which we now see to be, partly though not wholly, questions of words. There are some aspects of the Gospel, some temporary or local

beliefs, which fade away in the distance (as we might expect after 1800 years); but there are others which were never realized before in the same manner. For example, we can understand better than ever before what Christ meant when He said of the teacher who was not of His own followers, 'Forbid him not'; or what He meant when He replied to those who charged Him with profaning the Sabbath Day, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'; or the meaning of the Apostles when they said, 'Of a truth God is no respecter of persons,' and 'There is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus'; or the final result of St. Paul's 'high argument' in the Epistle to the Romans, when he says, 'So then God concluded all under sin that He might have mercy upon all.' Or, again, we can better realize the depth and fulness of those other words of Christ, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' than in the days when the visible greatness of the Church seemed to overshadow the earth.

Religion has become simpler than formerly; it is not so dependent on language; it is not so much disputed about as in the older times. Mankind have a larger and truer conception of the divine nature; they have also a wider knowledge of themselves. They see the various forms of Christianity which prevail in their own and other countries, they trace their origin and history, and they rise above them to

that higher part of Christian belief which they have in common. Their vision extends yet further, to the great religions of the East, and the controversies and phases of faith which have absorbed them. They set aside lesser perplexing questions, whether of criticism or of philosophy, which are neither important nor capable of being satisfactorily answered. They turn from theology to life, from disputes about the person of Christ to the imitation of Him 'who went about doing good.' He who begins by asking, 'What is the evidence of miracles? How are the discrepancies of the Gospels to be accounted for? How can the physical and spiritual qualities of man be harmonized?' is losing himself in questions which may continue to be in dispute long after he is in his grave. But to him who asks: 'How can I become better? How can I do the will of God? How can I serve my fellow men? How can I serve Christ?' the answer is in a manner contained in the question. He has the witness in himself of what is holy and just and true. He knows that righteousness and truth are the will of God; and he has the witness of life and history to the consequences of human actions.

Once more. There is a great part of knowledge which, coming late into the world, by a sort of accident, seems at present to be at war with religion, and yet can no more be separated from it than the mind can be parted from the body. It would be a false superficial religion which tried to ignore or put out

of sight these new branches of knowledge, so vast, so minute, which speak to us of the physical universe. Rather they are to be regarded as a new revelation which is added to the old, and is in some ways the interpretation of it. This is that part of knowledge which confirms, what daily experience also teaches, that we live under fixed laws. And sometimes we imagine them to be a prison which encloses us, or a high wall over which we cannot climb. But the truth is that they are a mode in which God manifests Himself, and that the knowledge of them is power and freedom. Not by being ignorant of them, but by knowing them, do we escape from the accidents of life; 'the arrow that flieth by night and the pestilence that walketh in the noon day.' And for the application of this knowledge to our own lives, just as much as for the application of any other kind of knowledge, we are responsible to God. Have we ever considered that the care of our health is a religious duty? and that to provide others with the conditions of health (upon which to them and us so much depends) is a religious act? Have we ever thought of the innumerable ways in which the state of the body affects the mind? If God has revealed to us in Scripture that we have the power to turn to Him and do His will, He has revealed to us in science that the mind is dependent upon the body, and that we can alter the circumstances of which we are sometimes called the creatures. And therefore the laws

which regulate our bodily frames are to be reverentially observed by us no less than the spiritual laws which Scripture and reason reveal to us. They have the witness of God Himself in the penalties which He has annexed to the violation of them. And they too require of us a certain degree of faith, because the consequences of breaking them are distant and unseen, and our immediate interests may often seem to be opposed to them, or our passions may rise in rebellion against them.

To conclude. In every state of the world, and in every class of society, there are elements of good and evil, of weakness and strength; and our character and disposition may be such that we extract the evil and reject the good, or extract the good and reject the evil. In our own age too, and in this place, there are peculiar difficulties and dangers. There is the temptation of youth to sensuality, and the equal if not greater danger of sentimentalism; there is the tendency to extravagance and self-indulgence, to indolence or irregularity; there is the flood of new ideas coming into conflict with old beliefs. Happy is he who, by good sense, by strength of character, and by Christian principles, steers his way amidst these rocks. Happy is he who has not only the enjoyment of these years which he passes at the University—to many the happiest of their whole lives, and of the greatest opportunity—but who can afterwards look back upon them as a time of innocence and of self-improvement,

a time of natural growth, in which he unlearned some prejudices and acquired a true love of knowledge and a real experience of life. Happy is he too who, in the evening of his years, instead of regretting the days of his youth or the ages of faith which are gone, feels his heart still beating in sympathy with the young and with the world around him; who has cheerfully met the mental trials which to a reflecting mind are inseparable from a state of progress or transition, and been renewed and invigorated by them; who has taken the good and rejected the evil of the age in which he has lived, and has learned the lesson which God intended that it should teach him.

XII

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY[1].

HE TAUGHT THEM AS ONE HAVING AUTHORITY, AND NOT AS THE SCRIBES.

MATT. vii. 29.

WE should like to carry with us in the mind's eye the form and features of Christ; we would rather have looked upon that face than upon any other among the sons of men. Whether, in the language of the prophet, His visage was marred more than any man's, either from the conflicts of His own spirit or from His sympathy with the sins and sufferings of men; or whether we may conceive Him to have been the image of a heavenly calm, of an authority which was given from above, of a divine grace and love; we naturally wish that we could have seen Him as He was in this world, and could have preserved the recollection of Him as we might of some earthly friend whom we always remember; and we may imagine that one look from Him, like that given to Peter, would have rebuked our sins and changed the course of our lives. The genius of the fifteenth and six-

[1] Preached at Balliol, April 12, 1880.

teenth centuries had many imaginary visions and likenesses of Christ. After a while the artist breaks through the traditional forms in which an earlier generation had hardly dared to give expression to the sacred features; and finally seeks to embody in the face of the Saviour all the attributes of perfected humanity. We see Him full of sadness and dignity as He sits among His disciples at the Last Supper, when He makes the discovery to them that 'there is one here who shall betray Me,' and the eager inquiry 'Who is it?' passes from one to the other of them; or as He appears in another picture answering those who asked Him of the tribute money, and seeming by His gentle wisdom to reprove the hardness and fanaticism which are depicted in the faces of His questioners; or as He is seen among the doctors, the image of ingenuous youth, yet having in His mind thoughts to which they were strangers; or as He is painted again and again bearing the likeness of suffering innocence in the judgement hall of Pilate, bound, helpless, scourged, yet having a majesty which shows that He is raised above this world. These are lessons which the painter's art is able to teach, pictures with which we may fill and people our minds; and thoughts too deep for words are to be found in many of them. For there is a noble use of art which by the help of colour and form raises us to the contemplation of the mind within, as there is also a degraded use of art which aims only at a false ideal of sense and

sensuality; and the change which we observe in the art of painting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as we pass from the old Byzantine types to the free and noble representations of Albert Durer and Leonardo da Vinci, is parallel to another change which has taken place later in the history of religious thought. For gradually as time has gone on we have learned to think of the character of Christ more simply and truly, more as if He were one of ourselves, but above us; no longer defined by hard dogmatical lines, but speaking to us naturally, heart to heart; whereas formerly men would have hardly ventured to conceive His character at all; they regarded Him rather as an inhabitant of another world, a divine stranger who passed before them for a moment, and of whom they could form no distinct impression. The great physiognomist Lavater is said to have been inspired in his researches into the human form by the hope of recovering this lost image of Christ. This was the eccentric fancy of a great and good man. But may there not be such an image present with us still? not pourtrayed by the fancy of the painter, nor chiselled in marble by the sculptor's art, nor capable of any outward representation, but Christ in the heart and conscience of man, Christ in the light of our lives, who is ever shining in us if we look inward and have eyes to see; to which image we repair when, like all things in the past, the vision of the historical Christ seems to be in any degree dim or distant to us.

The text describes one striking feature of the character of Christ. 'He spake to them as one that had authority.'

A like impression is derived from several other passages in the narrative of the Gospel; wherever He was, He exercised a sort of controlling power over men; and at last no one ventured to ask Him any more questions. The evangelists seem to imply that there was an awe about Him, not supernatural, but natural, which prevented other men from intruding upon Him and becoming too familiar with Him, though He was in the midst of them. He could live among publicans and harlots, the lowest of the people as we might deem them, and yet His dignity is not diminished but enhanced by this. He could defend Himself against all disputants, like Socrates, though with other weapons. He had the sort of influence which is given by the clear and dispassionate knowledge of other men's characters, for 'He knew what was in man.' When the Pharisees and Sadducees asked Him their quibbling questions about the tribute money, about marriage, about the Sabbath Day, He does not enter into a dispute with them, He rises above them to a higher principle—'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's'; 'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage'; 'It *is* lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day.' Or He appealed from the conventional to the natural, from the rigid

and precise rule to the feeling of the heart—'Why do Thy disciples fast not?' to which the answer is, 'They cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them; but when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they shall fast.' And there are some questions which He will not answer at all. For example, that very one, 'Who gave Thee this authority?' And at the last, when interrogated by Pilate, 'Art Thou King of the Jews?' when on the point of being led away to death, in the tone of an equal He answers still: 'My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.'

This is the language of authority, more impressive when deprived of all earthly show of power. And with this we may further contrast the language of seeming authority in which there is no intrinsic power of truth. He spake to them as One having authority, and not as the scribes. For they too were teachers of mankind, and they repeated Sabbath after Sabbath in the synagogues their unmeaning interpretations from the Old Testament; their foolish distinctions about the gold and the temple, about the altar and the gift which was upon the altar; their hollow evasions of the law which commanded them to maintain their parents; their false assumptions of the exclusive privileges of the Jewish race. Christ, as we may say in modern language, goes back to first prin-

ciples in religion; the scribes and Pharisees are only capable of disputing about details. Christ comes to bring a sword on earth, that is to say, to make men think, to make them repent, to arouse in a nation a consciousness of sin; to fight a battle against evil and falsehood everywhere: their mission is to make men contented with themselves, to bring down their principles to their practice, to attenuate the stern demands of the law of God, and to reduce them to the level of public opinion and of ordinary life. They are absorbed in routine and custom. They have never risen to the thought of a moral duty or of the nature of God as a Moral Being. To their minds what they supposed to be the revelation of Him to Moses was prior to every consideration of truth and right.

So, not in our own age only, but in many, has false authority tended to prevail over the true, the power of tradition over reason and conscience. Men do not easily or without an effort shake off what they have heard a thousand times. They do not easily or at once recognize how simple the Gospel is: 'Except a man receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.' There are some to whom this childlike simplicity only comes when they are quite old. After a long experience they understand at last that to know a few things in religion is all that is necessary or desirable—'To do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly before God.'

These are the truths about which the minister of Christ should desire to speak with authority; not about baptisms or laying on of hands, or about rubrics or vestments or metaphysical controversies.

If we once more ask the question which the Pharisees asked of Christ in another sense, and which at that time He refused to answer, 'Who gave Thee this authority?' the reply seems to be twofold: it was His own, and yet it was given Him by God. The acts which He performed, the words which He spoke, were not in a figure only the words and works of God; they came into His mind, they were suggested to His will, in the same way apparently as the words or acts of any other men. But they were inspired by a power different from that which moved other men; they had a divine force in them, flowing out of an irresistible conviction that He was one with God, and that they were the words of God.

And yet they were His own. He was absolutely one in Himself and had one thought only in His whole life. He was not like a politician trying expedients to adapt His opinions to the multitudes. He says to His brethren, 'My time is not yet, your time is always ready.' Whether men accepted His words or not was a matter of indifference to Him, and only elicited a sort of cry of pain from Him: 'Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.' There are some minds who seem to grow with success; they receive their power from others, and are

borne along on the wings of sympathy; and then popular good-will deserts them, and they fall and die. But Christ was not one of these dependent beings; He knew and was His own witness to the truth which He taught; He was Himself the truth embodied in a person of which He could no more divest Himself than we can divest ourselves of personal identity. And had all men been against Him, had He passed away without making a single convert, the truth would not have been the less true to Him. This simplicity, this confidence in God and in the truth, this freedom from the traditional opinion of men, this divine calmness, this union of strength and love, are the features in the character of Christ which we naturally connect with the authority which He exercised. He seemed to be above men because He was above them, because He was at one with Himself and had a hidden strength in God, because the words which He spoke were in accordance with the will of God and the eternal laws of the world.

And now I shall proceed to inquire how far we can imitate Christ in this quality of authority. For we all of us have some duties to perform in which the control of others is required; and in later life such duties increase and multiply upon us; in a school, in a parish, in a household, or perhaps in a public position. How can we exercise authority without seeming to exercise it; be felt without being heard; gain influence without noisy disputes, by the silent power

of a consistent life? This is a speculation of great practical importance of which I propose to speak in the remainder of this sermon, hoping still to keep present before our mind the example of Christ with which we began.

It is almost a truism to say that he who would control others must control himself. He must have a quieter and more impartial mind than those whom he would restore, he must make allowances for this, and sometimes put himself in their place. He must not either command or reprove until he is fully acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. He must convey the impression that he will listen to the voice of reason only, and not be moved by entreaties, that he remembers and does not forget, and that he observes more than he says. He must know the characters of those with whom he deals, he must show that he has a regard for their feelings when he is correcting or reproving them. The great art is to mingle authority with kindness; there are a few, but a very few, who by some happy tact have contrived so to rebuke another as to make him their friend for life. Kindness and sympathy have a wonderful power in this world; they smooth the rough places of life, they take off the angles, they make the exercise of authority possible. The mere manner in which a thing is said or done, say, in speaking to a child or a servant, makes all the difference. 'Behold, how good and how joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell

together in unity,' in a family, in a school, in a college, in a state. And we can only live in harmony when the spirit of order prevails among us, when there is the union of kindness and authority, when personalities are not rife among us, when we recognize that, over and above our individual lives, we have duties which we owe one to another, of friendliness and goodwill, as well as of mutual help and support. Is it not a fault of worldly prudence, as well as of Christian charity, ever to have a quarrel with another? Why should we say things which rankle in a sensitive mind, sometimes for this very reason, that we are ill at ease ourselves and vent our displeasure upon others? For quarrels and differences and coldnesses arise almost insensibly out of very small matters; a hasty word, a laugh, a command too sharply or nakedly uttered, will alienate the affection of another. Men are weak, and do not like to have their *amour propre* wounded; we must acknowledge this weakness, being conscious that we also experience the same. Especially persons who have any kind of superiority over others should try to enter into the feelings of those who are placed under them. The satirical word which might be allowable in others is not allowable in them. They cannot trample on the feelings of others and still govern them with a strong hand, although that is a fiction in which inconsiderate rulers or statesmen sometimes indulge. Rather, in the language of the apostle, there is a sense in which they must 'become

all things to all men, that they may win some'; or, to express the same truth more popularly, they must find the way to the hearts of men, and then they may do what they like with them. That authority is the most complete which is the least felt or perceived.

Thus in the exercise of authority there must be a basis of kindness and good-will, but many other qualities are also required in those who would influence or control others. Perhaps there must be a degree of reserve, for the world is governed, not by many words, but by few; and nothing is more inconsistent with the real exercise of power than rash and inconsiderate talking. We are not right in communicating to others every chance thought that may arise in our minds about ourselves or about them. There is a noble reserve which prevents us from intruding on the feelings of others, and sometimes refrain to ask for their sympathy or approbation. Dignity and self-respect are the natural accompaniments of authority, and the essence of dignity is simplicity. We must banish the thought of self, how we look, what effect we produce, what is the opinion of others about our sayings and doings; these only paralyze us at the time of action. We want to be, and not to seem, to think only of the duty which we have in hand, to be indifferent to the world around. We want to see things in their proper proportions; not to be fidgety or uneasy about trifles, nor to be greatly disturbed about any of those evils

which lightly pass away and are cured by time. There are no doubt some tendencies in this age which are unfavourable to the formation of such a character. Ideas succeed one another so fast; there is so much talk about persons; knowledge is so soon dissipated in criticism, that it is hard for the mind to remain in one stay; we seem to require simpler and deeper notions of truth and of God, and a more even current of life, not liable to eddies and distractions; and this equable life we must make for ourselves. And of this calmness or repose we must have the springs in ourselves, for we shall hardly find them in the world. The peace of God is to be found, not in this or that opinion, but in the sense of duty, in consistency, in simple faith and in the hope of another life. Where we began as children we end as men, confiding in a parent's love.

Most of us here present are on the threshold of active life, and in a few years we shall be filling posts of responsibility in which we, too, have to exercise authority over others. Then our characters will be put to the test, perhaps in the management of a school or of a parish, or in some other position of command, or subordinate. Shall we be found wanting? unable to control ourselves, and therefore unable to control others; without knowledge of mankind, and therefore incapable of bearing our part among them; with many good qualities perhaps, but, owing to some sensitiveness or levity or want of purpose, unequal to

the great struggle of existence, and not adapted to the profession or employment which we have chosen for ourselves? Forty years hence men will be passing judgement on us, and telling why one has succeeded and another failed, inverting sometimes the hopes that had been entertained of them in their youth. They will be raising the question why the life of one has been a blessing in the sphere to which he belonged, and another has gone from one thing to another and brought no fruit to perfection. Ought we not to forecast this judgement a little? Many reasons will be given for these failures and successes. Because so and so was or was not weak or vain; because he could or could not make himself respected; because he had no stability in him, or because he had a fixed purpose; because he was selfish or unselfish, hated or beloved; because he could not keep men together or manage them, or was or was not to be trusted in business. And there are many other reasons which will be given. Can we not see ourselves as others see us? For the world is a hard schoolmaster, and punishes us without giving reasons, and sometimes when we can no longer correct the deficiency. And often our own self-love blinds us to the end, and we attribute to accident what is really to be ascribed to some weakness or error in ourselves.

Lastly, let us place before ourselves that image of which I spoke at the beginning of this sermon—the image of Him whose gentleness and goodness, whose

dignity and authority, we would feign make our pattern, though we follow Him at a distance only. For while we acknowledge the value of the judgements of our fellow men, which may correct our own judgements, we desire also a higher and perfect standard which may correct theirs. We cannot altogether trust them, and still less can we trust ourselves. And we know of course that the worth of a life is not altogether measured by failure or success. We must live in the world, but we want to live above it; in this way only can we have the true use of it. Self-knowledge and the knowledge of mankind have a great value, but there is a higher knowledge still, which shows us human ends and purposes as they are in the sight of God. The truest rule of conduct is, 'Thou God seest me'; and the truest dignity and the highest authority which man can attain among his fellows is derived from the consciousness that, like Christ, he is seeking to fulfil the will of God on earth and to do His work.

XIII

THE UNWORLDLY KINGDOM[1].

MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD; IF MY KINGDOM WERE OF THIS WORLD, THEN WOULD MY SERVANTS FIGHT.

JOHN viii. 36.

HOW far religion and morality should enter into politics is a question not easily answered. There are some who say that 'what is morally wrong can never be politically right,' but they forget how rarely this truth or truism is capable of application. Nor can the question always receive the same answer. For, in different ages of the world, Church and State, as we now call them, religion and politics, the outer and the inner life of man, stand in different relations to one another. In the beginning of history, and in the times before history, they are not yet divided. Religion rather than reason, or reason taking the form of religion, is the light of human existence in the dawn of the world's day. The founder of the city is the god of the city, the temple of Athena crowns the Acropolis, the forces of nature which are too much

[1] Preached at Balliol, Jan. 22, 1882.

for man, the uncontrollable passions or inspirations within him, are also supposed to be protecting or guiding powers. The institutions of the state are received by some legislator from heaven. Though among the Greeks individuals may have been stigmatized as atheists, yet there was no city without gods. At every turn human life was regulated by ceremonies, of which the meaning was often lost in after ages. Religion was the bond of society as well as of the state. In later ages it became divided into two parts—the icy crust and the living stream—the prescribed routine of sacrifice and offering and the better mind of the worshippers rising in almost unconscious thought to a divine power and goodness.

Such was the ordinary progress of the Gentile religions which are best known to us. The Jewish theory was of a higher type and attained to a nobler conception. The Israelites, without losing altogether the national idea of God, yet thought of Him also, though confusedly, as the God of the whole earth, 'sitting upon the circle of the heavens,' perfect in justice and holiness and truth. Whether this nobler conception of God was part of an original revelation to Moses, or a new life infused into the decaying nation long afterwards by psalmists and prophets, is a matter of controversy. For the Hebrew religion may be regarded in two ways, either as declining from a more perfect idea, or, like the Greek, progressing towards it. In the latter case the laws of Moses

may be compared with similar works of legislators in ancient Hellas, while the Jewish prophets, though so different, would have a certain analogy to the philosophers of Hellas. However this question may be determined, the ideal, whether of the past or of the future (as indeed is ever the case in this world), remained unrealized. The prophets and psalmists are always lamenting over the backsliding of their countrymen. They were a rebellious race, never good for much at any time. After the return from captivity they sank into Pharisaism and Sadduceeism, as their ancestors had fallen into Phœnician and Egyptian idolatry. At length in the minds of good men arose a settled belief, that 'there remained yet a rest for the people of God.' Somehow—they could not tell where, whether at Jerusalem or in the distant heaven, a King would reign in righteousness, and there would be a kingdom comprehending all nations. And any premature efforts to establish this kingdom, like those of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, ended only in disappointment, fanaticism and death. In our own age the outward connexion between religion and politics has been to a great extent given up. Religious observances no longer inaugurate all public occasions, and when they are retained they often partake of the nature of a form. Church and State are more and more divided, and in our own country they abstain to a great extent from interference with one another. The days of Cor-

poration and Tests Acts, of Roman Catholic exclusion, have passed away, and no one wishes to revive them. One distinguished man, Dr. Arnold, living between the old and the new worlds of politics, and forming his opinion too entirely on the study of the Old Testament and of ancient history and philosophy, used to maintain the identity of Church and State; whence he deduced the somewhat perilous inference that none but Christians should be members of a state. The contemporary representation of a somewhat different school of thought was equally strenuous in asserting that the state was only a machine for the protection of life and property, assuming that if these were secured the interests of religion and morality would best take care of themselves. And the political reformers of that day, probably not from any vulgarity of mind, but because they felt the necessity of having a single and definite principle, based their doctrine chiefly on the philosophy of utility. In the greatest happiness of the greatest number they saw, or thought they saw, the firmest safeguard or bulwark against war, against priestcraft, against the various forms of selfishness and class-interest. Such a principle offered a guiding thread through the tangle of human actions and motives; and many who held it were among the most disinterested of mankind. In our own generation we are beginning to feel that there was a want which this system had not supplied. It was too dry and logical, neither appealing in the

right way to the imagination nor touching the heart, though furnishing a useful corrective to many errors and prejudices.

The change from religion and divine right to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, though very real and important, is less important from some points of view than it appears. The best men, though they have different theories about the nature of human actions, and sometimes entertain the greatest dislike to one another, yet come round in practice to the same point. When the question is, What is honest? What is pure? What is true? What is disinterested? though the effect of these general speculations on the human mind may be very different, they will not be found to vary in the answer. For where the sense of duty is, religion is not far off. When men are serving their fellows they are serving God also. The protests against the introduction of religion into politics are really protests against the abuse of it. When religion became a craft, the most subtle of all crafts, and the priest stood behind the soldier, when men saw the best, i.e. the most religious of men, Bossuet and Massillon, defending the massacres and tortures of the Huguenots, can we wonder that they should have wished to banish a religion of which these were the fruits? Nor can we be surprised at the noblest minds revolting from religion, or at whole countries like Italy and France falling into a reaction against it, and not even now recovering their equilibrium. But

when we consider how deep and powerful an influence religion has exerted in all ages and countries we can hardly suppose that her power is exhausted, or that the aberration of human nature from itself is destined to be permanent. The day may be coming when a larger idea of Christianity, the true religion of Christ, may win back the hearts of those who have been repelled by the perversions and disfigurements of it.

At this time, when our thoughts are turned more than usually to political events, the question 'What has religion and morality to do with politics?' has a peculiar interest. Must we insist that they are always identical, or shall we admit that they may diverge? Is an answer to be found to great political and social problems in Scripture? or can we solve them by an immediate reference of them to the will of God, or to the conscience of man? There are obviously false ways in which religion and politics are pressed into the service of each other. There must also be a true connexion between them, if we could only find it. And, first, I will consider some of the false modes of connecting them which have prevailed in other ages, and which even in our own day continue to pervert and entangle the natural course of human progress. For ideas remain in men's minds, and affect parties, when they have ceased to be embodied in noble institutions, and may even be most dangerous when least recognized. Secondly, having

examined the false, I will proceed to consider the true connexion, which is not necessarily less real because it is not displayed in outward signs and symbols as was formerly the case in mediæval and other ages. Religion may be the greatest blessing of the human race, and also a curse; it may guide men into light and truth; it may plunge them into darkness and falsehood. It may raise them above human nature; it may depress them below it. There is a religion which is the imitation of Christ; there is also a religion which is the incentive to any wickedness, and the disguise of it. And, when we would introduce religion into politics, we must be careful what sort of a religion it is. When I try a public act by this standard, when I ask, Is this declaration of war, this annexation of territory, this protection of slavery, according to the will of God? I must begin by asking what is the true notion of God: Is He a Being to whom war is acceptable or in whose service wars can be waged? Is He the God of Christ, or of Mahomet? Even in the Hebrew Scriptures there are expressions which fall very far short of the conception of Him which is declared to us in the New Testament, and which, independently of the New Testament, receives the witness of our own heart and conscience; and until we have purified our conception of God from every dark shadow of human prejudices, we cannot safely make His will the rule of political action or of our daily life. We must see Him as the prophet saw

Him, 'having the body of heaven in His clearness,' not the mere reflection of our own religious opinion or of the traditions of our ancestors.

But, supposing the true idea of the divine nature to be ever present to our minds, it by no means follows that it would be a sufficient guide to the conduct of politics or of life. For the greater number of human actions cannot be immediately tried by the standard of truth and right. The great end of all this, the happiness, the elevation of human life, may be clear and plain to us, but the means by which the end is to be attained can be only known from experience. Nor is the end altogether separable from the means: it will often appear to be the sum of the means, or the spirit which animates the use of them. To the question, What shall I do? the answer, both in political and ordinary life, is generally, not 'what is right' (this would in most cases be no answer), but what is best. Nor is there any rough and ready way of resolving politics into morals. Take for example the case of temperance: while all men are agreed in denouncing the evil of drinking, yet the particular measure by which the evil may be cured can only be chosen after patient thought and reflection on the facts. The means may not always conform to the supposed lessons of Scripture, they may be even at variance with them. To take an instance: David, in numbering the people, is said to have committed a sin which was punished by a pestilence. In our own day it would

be a sin not to number the people, for we should remain in wilful ignorance of the laws by which God governs the world, including the ways of that very pestilence by which He was supposed to have punished Israel. Consider, again, the relief of the poor: How often has an unthinking appeal to Scripture been made on this behalf! It is our duty to do much more for them than we do. But ought we to remedy an evil by increasing it? or alleviate physical suffering at the expense of moral degradation? The whole question of their condition lies deep in the constitution of society, and cannot be got rid of by the distribution of alms, or by indulging the first impulses of pity and compassion. What we do for them must be done wisely, or it will effect more harm than good.

Again, let us illustrate the question which we are discussing by the case of war. Who would doubt that Christianity and all true religion is opposed to war? We do not hold with a recent theologian that the religion of Christ stands by and is only a looker-on when the question of war and peace hangs in the balance, and when men have fought it out there appears on the battlefield, bending over the dead and dying, saint-like, the ministering angel, shedding holy influences in the foul and corrupted atmosphere. For against many wars, that is to say against all wars of selfish ambition and aggression, religion and morality alike lift up their voice. But of other wars, again, we cannot judge in this decided manner. Peace may be

only secured by the threat of war, and war may be hastened by the knowledge that another nation is secure in peace. There is more than one illusion to which we are naturally subject on this question—the horror of the war may deter us from considering the duty and necessity of self-defence; the heroism of war may gild the aggression of a tyrant. Who can tell whether the sufferings of one generation may not be compensated by the safety and liberties of another, or by the example which they have bequeathed to posterity? We cannot say of all battles that it would have been well for the world if they had not been fought—the virtues of war tend in a measure to correct the vices of peace. There is no greater responsibility than that of declaring war; but considering the complexity of human affairs and the uncertainty of consequences, this is not a question which can be always decided simply as a matter of right and wrong.

The attempt to form moral judgements on politics is a temptation which naturally besets us, for if we can raise political questions into moral ones we effectually place ourselves in the right and our opponents in the wrong. We elevate ourselves on a sort of moral platform; we appeal to the heart against the head, to the feelings against the reason. We trust to the force of general principles weighed in the balance with doubtful or disputed facts. These are arts which most men unconsciously practise in times of political

excitement, and a generous person who has any insight into human nature is apt to revolt from them, because he knows that religion and morality are the disguises of party spirit. I will add one more illustration of the wrong way in which religion may be introduced into politics. I am old enough to remember the time when a respectable section of the community believed that the judgements of God were about to fall upon this country. And for what? For our neglect of education? for the sufferings of the poor? for our toleration of slavery (now happily abolished)? for the severity of our criminal code? For none of these things, but because we had admitted our Roman Catholic brethren to Parliament, or, about twelve years later, because we had given a grant for the education of poor Roman Catholic priests! It was argued that if a nation, like an individual, had a conscience, it must, like an individual, have one conscience; and upon this fallacy of composition or division, as logicians would term it, and under the still greater fallacy that in gratifying their own party feelings they were doing God service, the peace of nations was imperilled, the risk of civil wars was incurred. For, if such a doctrine could be maintained, there would seem to be no stopping until the members of all religions but the dominant and established one were excluded from civil and political rights. We must wade through oceans of blood to an unmeaning uniformity in religion; and, although this religious

tyranny is overpast, it cannot be said even now that the sympathies and antipathies of churches and religious bodies have no influence on the enmities and wars of nations. The immediate interests of their own order may often be strong in them, while they have little or no feeling for all that is without.

But is there, then, no rule of right and wrong by which the statesman must guide his steps, no true way in which morality and religion enter into politics? First of all, he has the rule not to do anything as a statesman which as a private individual he would not allow himself to do. A great and good man will not flatter, will not deceive, will not confuse his own interests or those of his party with the interests of his country, will fear no one, will, if he can help it, offend no one. He will feel, though he will not say, that he has a trust committed to him by God, and the greatest of all trusts, for which he must give an account. And sometimes he will need to steady himself in the thought of immortality and eternity against the forces which oppose him, whether the frowns of a sovereign or the dislike of a class or the clamour of the populace. He will sometimes think of another kingdom which is not to be found upon earth. But he will not be fond of arguing merely political questions on moral grounds, because he knows that in this way he is likely to miss their real drift. He will not expect to learn from Scripture whether the authority of princes shall be maintained, whether some tax or

tithe shall be imposed or repealed, whether certain regulations respecting degrees of affinity in marriage shall be enforced or not, whether usury laws are good or bad. The example of Christ will not enable him to determine what measures of relief should be taken in an Irish or Scotch famine, or even in the ordinary management of the poor. These are questions of expediency, in which the best thing to be done is also the right thing, and the best can only be discovered by a close and conscientious study of the facts. There is no revelation of this from heaven; but the spirit of Christ may still be the underlying motive of the statesman's life. And sometimes, amid the piles of statistics, in the hurry and distraction of his work, that motive may be very near and present to him. But he must think as well as feel; he must balance the greater evil which is seen against the lesser which is unseen; he must know how much of a evil must be endured. He has to work through means; he cannot drop out the intermediate steps, or in a mistaken spirit of faith undertake some great enterprise.

Thus he will have to be on his guard against religion out of place. He is, as some would say, the creature of expediency—that is to say, God's expediency—for he must act according to the laws which God prescribes for him, and which are known to us through experience only. He must understand the world in which he lives. Himself above party and

selfish interest, he will seek to inspire the greatest unity among his followers at the cost of the least enmity among his opponents. He will sternly repress in himself all dislike of persons, for the sake of the cause which he has in hand, and also because he knows that, while the struggle is going on, he is no fair judge of them. His religion will be never or hardly ever on his lips, for he fears lest it should become a political engine. But the impress of his character, his seriousness, his patriotism, his elevation, will communicate itself to others and mould the thoughts of a generation.

This, then, is one way in which religion connects with politics—through the lives of statesmen. And there are other ways also. For a state or nation is a living being, not a mere adaptation of means to ends. To a certain extent it is like one man and has the feelings of a man, and is subject to common impulses towards good and evil. No human being can be governed merely on mechanical principles; no nation can be administered according to the rules of profit and loss. The bonds of commerce are but as green withes if it is expected by them to secure the blessings of peace. The poorest and humblest have their attachments and hatreds, their religious belief, their questionings about this world and another. They are inwardly conscious of a truth and right far higher than exists here; they hope, after their long life of labour, for the promised rest; and by the side

of this world, in which there are so many things wrong, they place the image of a city whose builder and maker is God. Here, then, is another field for religion in politics—to draw forth the nobler elements which exist in all societies, to express them and to present them to the mind anew, to reflect them through many mirrors on the sight of all men, to infuse them into a parliament or into a nation. This is a religious mission, and the noblest of all religious missions, on which gifts of poetry and eloquence and philosophy can be bestowed.

Once more, politics are limited by morality, and in this sense we may truly say that what is morally wrong cannot be politically right. If cruelty is wrong in individuals, it is wrong in nations or churches; if falsehood is wrong, if injustice is wrong, in individuals, they are wrong also in nations or churches. If the desire to do good should exist in individuals towards each other, it should exist also and be felt in nations towards each other. We ought not to stand unthinkingly by, happy in our island home, while half a continent is being wasted and oppressed. But then at once arises the question how to interfere so as not to introduce evils greater than those which we are seeking to remedy. For in all cases we must consider the imperfect and constrained character of collective action. A nation, like an army, can never have the agility or life of a single man; and sometimes even tyranny may be better than anarchy, and we may

hesitate to displace even a bad government when we can only let loose antagonistic forces.

Yet we note also with satisfaction that religion and morality have leavened politics in a very striking manner during the last century. They may have disappeared in words, but they have asserted themselves in the spirit of our legislation. The abolition of slavery and the slave trade, the mitigation of the criminal code, the removal of religious disabilities, are not the result of the utilitarian philosophy, however valuable that may have been in its effect on many points of our legislation, but of an increased sense of humanity and justice. Men have felt their common brotherhood more and more; they have been more conscious of their duties to the weak and suffering; the spirit of Christ has had a great hold on their minds; and if there be some who lament a certain appearance of decay in the outward institutions of religion, they should also remember that there is another aspect of religion, under which the nineteenth century will bear comparison with the so-called ages of faith or the traditions of the primitive church. The best fruit of every institution is, not that which is without but that which is within, not the house made with hands, nor the system of doctrine laid down in books, nor the rites of churches, but the spirit which animated them, the better mind, the higher conscience, the sound public opinion, the simplicity of social life: by these they should be judged.

Thus far I have been discussing the question raised by Aristotle in the *Politics*, whether the good citizen is also the good man, which is his way of stating what in modern language would be called the relation of morals to politics. The converse question may also be asked, 'whether the good man must also be the good citizen.' The same question might also be put in another form—whether a religious man, or a patriot, or a philosopher may withdraw from the world. For he may live at a time when circumstances are against him, when by struggling he would do harm to his own cause; he may be before his age, and would at once lose his life if he engaged in the passing conflict: or he may feel some special incapacity for dealing with his fellow men; his mind may not be practical, but speculative or meditative; though full of humanity he may wish to live at peace and not to strive; he may be thinking more of another world than of this. I am not speaking of a man shutting himself up in a monastery, and leaving all active duties towards his fellow men unperformed, but only of his withdrawing from agitation and party movement and the bustle of the world, that he may lead a more composed and considered life.

The question which I have asked there is not time to answer; yet the answer to it may be sufficiently gathered from the example of Christ Himself. The life of Christ is the life of a private man, which stands in no relation to the history of the Jewish nation. He

belongs neither to this political party nor to that. He is not one of the faction who call no man master, the fanatics or patriots who stirred up the war of the Jews with the Romans until they also perished. He would not have counted for anything in the disputes of Pharisees and doctors of the law. Their language would not have been uttered, perhaps not even understood, by Him; we cannot tell. 'He shall not strive nor cry, nor shall any man hear His voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall He not break, nor quench the smoking flax.' This is not the description of a politician or a partisan. All the ordinary motives of human ambition He rejects: 'It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.' Yet He is gifted with a sort of divine insight—favoured, may we say, by His manner of life—into the hearts and minds of men. 'He knew what was in man.' Nor was He wanting in the power of evading a subtle question: 'Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?' and 'Shall we pay tribute unto Cæsar or not?' But he does not determine whether human relations shall continue in another world, or distinguish what things belong to Cæsar and what things to God. He only seeks to confound the ambiguities and perplexities by which we set aside the moral law; whether a child should support his parents, whether a husband might put away his wife, and the like. He fights the battle

of human nature against hypocrisy and self-deceit everywhere.

He has a vision, too, of a kingdom not of this world, nor to be realized in ecclesiastical buildings or apostolical succession of bishops, but a kingdom which is to affect all others, and to which as to a standard they are to be compared. It is a kingdom not to be manifested by outward signs, nor to be fought for by earthly weapons, but to be a real power in the hearts of men. He was and He was not a king; not in the ordinary sense, but in a higher one, in a natural one; not a king surrounded by armies, a Messiah or deliverer such as the Jews expected, such as His own disciples hoped that He would proclaim Himself; but a Deliverer from sin and suffering, a Saviour Prince, leading men on to victory over themselves and over the evils of the world.

And if there be any one among the followers of Christ who feels himself unsuited to the turmoil of active life, who would fain withdraw from political strife, who dislikes theological controversy, who is confused by the conflict of opinions, and seeks only to possess his soul in peace and to go about doing good, the example of Christ Himself will be a sufficient justification for him. The silent life of a poor woman may be of more account in the sight of God than the careers of many politicians. 'Mary hath chosen that better part which shall not be taken from her.' There are times when men are called upon to be patriots

and heroes; there are times also when it is well for them to lead, like Christ, a private life only, and through that to work upon their fellow-men. There are characters and gifts which find a natural sphere in politics; there are men who are most useful when they are speaking or acting; there are other characters and men who find the truest expression of themselves in thinking or writing, who live with God or in the heaven of ideas rather than with their fellow-men. There are practical and speculative natures. Either of them may supply the defect of the other; and both may equally be the servants of Christ.

XIV

THE LORD'S PRAYER[1].

AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT AS HE WAS PRAYING IN A CERTAIN PLACE, WHEN HE CEASED, ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES SAID UNTO HIM, 'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY, AS JOHN ALSO TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES.' AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, 'WHEN YE PRAY, SAY, OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.'

LUKE xi. 1, 2.

THE Lord's Prayer has been the type of prayer among Christians in all ages. For eighteen centuries men have poured forth their hearts to God in these few words, which have probably had a greater influence on the world than all the writings of theologians put together. They are the simplest form of communion with Christ: when we utter them we are one with Him; His thoughts become our thoughts, and we draw near to God through Him. They are also the simplest form of communion with our-fellow men, in which we acknowledge Him to be our common Father and we His children. And the least particulars of our lives admit of being ranged under one or other of the petitions which we offer up to Him.

[1] Preached at Balliol, 1872.

It would be an error to suppose that the words of the Lord's Prayer are altogether new, or that they seemed to the disciples of Christ quite different from anything which they had ever heard before. Truth does not descend from heaven like a sacred stone dropped out of another world, concerning which men vainly dispute what it is or whence it came. But it is the good word, the good thought, the good action, which arises in a man's mind; as the apostle also says, 'The word is very nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.' The great prophet or teacher draws out what is latent in man, he interrogates their consciences, he finds a witness in them to the best. And, therefore, when we are told that parallels to all the petitions contained in the Lord's Prayer may be found in Rabbinical writers, when we remark that in Seneca and other Gentile philosophers we are exhorted to forgiveness of injuries, when we read in Epictetus the words, 'We have all sinned, some more, some less grievously,' there is no reason why we should be shocked or surprised at these parallelisms. Neither is the Lord's Prayer less fitted to be the medium of our communion with God because ancient holy men have used several of its petitions before the time of Christ, as all Christians have been in the habit of using them since. Are not all true sayings and all good thoughts, in all times and in all places, the anticipation of a truth which is shining more and more unto the perfect day?

The Lord's Prayer is the simplest of all prayers, and also the deepest. We are children addressing a Father who is also the Lord of heaven and earth. In Him all the families of the earth become one family. The past as well as the present, the dead as well as the living, are embraced by His love. When we draw near to Him we draw nearer also to our fellow men. From the smaller family to which we are bound by ties of relationship we extend our thoughts to that larger family which lives in His presence. When we say 'Our Father' we do not mean that God is the Father of us in particular, but of the whole human race, the great family in heaven and earth. The heavenly Father is not like the earthly; yet through this image we attain a nearer notion of God than through any other. We mean that He loves us, that He educates us and all mankind, that He provides laws for us, that He receives us like the prodigal in the parable when we go astray. We mean that His is the nature which we most revere, with a mixed feeling of awe and of love; that He knows what is for our good far better than we know ourselves, and is able to do for us above all that we can ask or think. We mean that in His hands we are children, whose wish and pleasure is to do His will, whose duty is to trust in Him in all the accidents of their lives.

And, before we can pray to God in a worthy manner, we must still further distinguish between the

earthly and heavenly Father. For although we speak of Him as a Father, which implies also the idea of personality, we do not mean that He is subject to personal caprice, or that He favours some of His children more than others, or that He will alter His universal laws in order to avert some calamity from us. All experience is against this, and we should destroy religion if we set up faith against universal experience. For either we should dwell in a sort of fools' paradise, believing that our prayers had been answered when they had not been, because we had asked things which God could not grant (for they were at variance with the laws of the universe); or we should deny that there was a God altogether, because there was no such God as we had imagined. We must enlarge the horizon of our thoughts, and conceive of God once more as the infinite, the eternal Father, 'with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning' either in the physical or in the moral world; He of whom Christ says, 'Are not two sparrows sold for one farthing? and yet your heavenly Father careth for them,' and 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered'; and yet also the universal law, the mind or reason which contains all laws, as much above the world of which He is the Author as our souls are above our bodies; in whom all things live and move and have their being; who is the perfection of all things, and yet distinct from them.

A great effort of mind is required of us if we would think of God truly, and also pray to Him. The imagination more easily conceives Him as a king seated on the clouds of heaven, and human creatures bowing before Him like Moses and the elders of Israel at Mount Sinai, hardly able to endure the glory that was revealed. And among the uneducated there are many religious persons who conceive of God as the friend in the next room, or rather in this, by whom they are seen when performing the most trivial actions of their lives, with whom they converse as with an earthly acquaintance, and tell Him garrulously of their sorrows and their joys. And perhaps they may think and speak of Him in a manner suited to them, but not in a manner suitable or natural to us. For we desire to approach that which is highest in the world with that which is highest in us, with our reason, and not with our feelings only—with such a prayer as men (and not children only) may use, living in the light of the nineteenth century, and not in the days when men were ignorant of the fixed laws of nature. Of this higher or true prayer, of this rational or mental service, I propose to speak in the remainder of this sermon. And then I shall go on to consider some of the hindrances or difficulties which most of us find both in private prayer and also in the common or public worship of God.

The beginning of true prayer is resignation to the divine will. We must not try to make His will our

will, but to make our will His will. We must not kick against the pricks, or beg that this sickness or pain, the loss of this beloved one, may be averted from us. For God has taught us by many signs and proofs that these things are regulated by fixed laws. And is there not a kind of impiety in refusing to learn the plainest of lessons? Now that the book of nature has been revealed to us, must we not have the courage to say, a little parodying the words of the prophet, 'Henceforth there shall be no more this prayer in the Christian Church, "Father, alter Thy laws for our good"; but "Father, if it be possible . . . nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done"'? We wish to live, perhaps, and accomplish a little more before we go home; but we know very well that our prayers will not delay the coming on of age, or restore the failing sight, or revive the strength of the paralyzed. 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' And in youth there are often troubles which happen to us, great in themselves, and rendered greater by imagination, such as loss of fortune, or inferiority of position, or disappointment of the affections, or some other kind of disappointment; and we think with bitterness, 'Oh, that we could have this particular trial spared to us; that we could have had the position of which we could have made such a good use; the friend without whom life seems hardly worth having!' But all this is weakness and discontent. Can we not rise out of these crises of our lives, acquiescing in

the will of God, but starting afresh to do Him service, making stepping-stones of our former selves towards something higher, setting our hearts where true joys are to be found? We cannot go to God and say, 'O God, give me the life of that child, or sister, or wife, who is visibly hastening to the end.' But we can say, 'Though He smite me, yet will I trust in Him'; 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Neither can we go to Him and say, 'O Lord, give me wealth,' or even, 'give me a sufficiency of the means of life, that I may make a good use of them.' But we can go to Him and say, 'O Lord, we thank Thee for the blessings which Thou hast given us, and for the sorrows by which Thou hast chastened us. Grant that we may draw nearer to Thee, and do Thy will more perfectly.' What is this but praying that we may be more holy, more pure, more just, more truthful, more willing to live for others? Can we offer up such prayers too often, or have too many of them?

And this leads me to speak of a second aspect of prayer, communion or co-operation with God. For prayer is not the mere utterance of a few words in public or private at set times, but is the expression of a life. When we talk with men our words flow naturally out of our characters; we like to impart our thoughts to them, and to receive their thoughts in return. And when we speak with God, our power of addressing Him or holding communion with Him

depends upon the identity of our will with His. Can we retire to rest with the feeling, 'Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' remembering too that in the darkness 'Thou, God, seest us'? Can we rise in the morning almost with a feeling of joy that we are spared another day to do Him service--'Awake, my soul, and with the sun Thy daily stage of duty run'? Does the thought ever occur to us in the course of the day that we will correct that particular fault, intellectual or moral, whether idleness, or want of accuracy or method, or any other fault, not with a view to success in life, or to university distinction, but in order that we may be able to serve Him better? Or do we ever seek to carry on the battle against sin and evil and the temptations which beset us, conscious that in ourselves we are weak, but that there is a strength greater than our own which is perfected in weakness? Or, once more, do we sometimes think of God as the Eternal, into whose hands we resign ourselves when we depart hence, with whom do live the spirits of the just made perfect, and who in the hour of death will be our trust and hope? We would not always be thinking of death, for we must live before we die; yet the thought of a time when we shall have passed out of the sight and memory of men may also help us to live, may assist us in shaking off the load of passions, prejudices, interests which weigh us down, may teach us to rise out of this world into the clearer light of another.

This is the spirit of prayer, the spirit of converse or communion with God, which leads us in all our actions silently to think of Him and refer them to Him. Such a spirit also enables us to know Him, as far as our faculties will admit. It is a great step in the knowledge of God to recognize that the laws by which He governs the world are fixed, and that true religion, as well as philosophy, requires that we should submit to them, and not by any freak of imagination seek to escape from them. But it is a still greater step in our knowledge of God when we recognize Him as the Author of good in the world, when we hear in the voice of conscience His voice speaking to us, when we are aware that He is the witness, and also the source, of every good thought in us; and that, when we feel in our hearts the struggle against some lust or evil passion, then God is fighting with us against envy, against selfishness, against impurity, for our better self against our worse self. And, once more, there is a further step, when we think of Him as not only co-operating with us, but going before us or preventing us, when we begin to see that He has an education or plan of salvation prepared, not only for us, but for all mankind, extending through many ages, even to eternity, in which we too may take a part and have a share, and find the true meaning of our lives in His service.

Another aspect of prayer is the confession of our wrong-doing. There are sins which we have com-

mitted, or a course of life, idle or expensive pleasure, in which we have indulged, or feelings which we have entertained towards others, which were not right: of these we ought to think sometimes at our prayers. Then is the time to get rid of hypocrisy and see ourselves as we truly are in the sight of God. I do not think that we are called upon to confess our sins to men, except in certain cases, or when we have individually wronged them; but we are called upon to acknowledge them before God—'O Lord, against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.' Nor should we tease ourselves about the past, which cannot be undone. But we should set before ourselves, and fix indelibly in our minds, that these things were wrong, offences against the laws of God, and some of them perhaps disgraceful in the opinion of men. One use of prayer is to maintain in us a higher standard, and prevent our principles insensibly sinking to our practice, or to the practice of the world around us. When a man listens to the voice of the tempter within him, he is inclined to do as others do, not to resist when the temptation seems great. But when he looks into the law of God and hears the words of Christ, his natural sense of right and wrong is restored to him, and he becomes elevated, purified, sanctified.

These are some of the thoughts which may occupy our minds at public as well as private prayer. And there are many others which each one can supply for himself. We desire for a few minutes in each day to

live in the presence of God, in the presence of truth and justice and holiness and love, and to think of other men as they are in the presence of God. Yea, and of ourselves also, that we may free our minds from vanities and jealousies, that we may grow in self-knowledge and in true knowledge of the world, that we may have peace in the thought of death. And, if our horizon seems to enlarge, and new knowledge makes the old childish prayer impossible to us, let the horizon of our prayers enlarge too and include all knowledge and all truth, that we may be reconciled to ourselves, and learn to devote our intellectual gifts wholly to the service of God and man.

Let me say a few words in conclusion about our worship in this place. No one is compelled to attend the chapel service; nor will any of us think worse of those who are absent than of those who come. Prayer is the offering of the heart to God, and cannot be enforced. College rules might keep up the appearance of religion among us, but not the reality. And we must endeavour to avoid the error of dividing this or any other society into those who think with us and those who do not. Persons who have strong religious feelings must be on their guard against the danger, not exactly of thinking too well of themselves (for no man consciously does this), but of isolating themselves, of falling into party spirit, of allowing devotion insensibly to degenerate into superstition. If they can do any good to others, they must be like

them; they must draw others to them by the insensible influence of their characters, and not by a profession of religion.

And, speaking to others, may I be allowed to say that many or most of us would be better for coming to chapel on week-days; at least I think so. A few minutes of calm thought, in which we hear the best of words read and offer up the day to God, ought not to be a burden to us. In this ever-increasing hurry of life, and in this nineteenth century, when we live so fast, as people sometimes say, do we not require a breathing time, a moment or two daily, to think where we are going? In youth especially, when we are laying the foundation of our after life, and find such a difficulty in realizing that this gay time, this sunshine or summer of enjoyment and health, these few years passed at the University, are in reality the most important of all. We have been all of us taught to pray by our parents in the days of our childhood. Is there not something sad in our throwing this aside when most required by us, on the threshold of manhood? Life is a shallow thing without religion, and at times the old religious feelings will come back upon us and assert their natural powers. As years go on we shall have others to teach, and may then find that the springs of religion are dried up within us, and that we have no religious gift or influence to impart to them such as our parents imparted to us. Then we may feel painfully about

them what we do not at present think about ourselves. We may wish that they had the restraint of religion to enable them to resist the lusts of the flesh and the other temptations of evil; we may regret that they are so worldly and external, or perhaps that, following some natural impulse, they have rushed into some opposite extreme, and perceive too late that the deficiency in their characters began in our own.

But if a person, not from indolence or levity, says that he has no inclination to join in our daily public prayer, and that he is afraid of falling into formalism or conventionalism, I would not condemn him or regard him as less a Christian on that account. Every one must judge for himself, and the end is not to be confounded with the means. But, if he forsakes the customs of others, he is the more bound to watch strictly over himself. He has not less, but perhaps rather more, need of a high standard of duty and of life. He must make a religion for himself of what he knows to be right, of whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. He must teach himself humility and modesty from a consciousness of his own weakness and liability to error, and the narrowness of the human faculties. He must think of sickness and old age and death as possibilities and realities of life. He must acknowledge that mere worldly success to any higher mind is not worth having. He must condemn many of his own actions when he calmly reviews them. He

must lament over opportunities which he has lost. He must desire to become better. For to all good men, whether they use the words or not, life is an aspiration and a prayer. And sometimes they may be doing the work of God while yet only seeking after Him and still ignorant of Him.

XV

PRAYER AND LIFE[1].

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY, AS JOHN ALSO TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES.

LUKE xi. 1.

THIS has been thought to be an age in which the Christian religion is beset by great dangers and surrounded by peculiar difficulties. There is said to be a conflict going on between experience and faith, between the old and the new, between the traditions and doctrines of the Church and the critical spirit of modern times. People ask, What is to become of us or of our children in the next generation, or fifty or a hundred years hence, when the foundations which are beginning to loosen have altogether given way; when the doubts which are now whispered in the closet are proclaimed on the housetop; when, as time goes on, the Christian world is divided more and more into two opposing armies of the maintainers of reason and revelation? Shall we be Christians any longer when the facts of Scripture history have been subject

[1] Preached at Balliol, May 18, 1884.

to the same sort of microscopic criticism as the histories of Greece or of Rome? Shall we be able to pray any longer when the sequence and order of nature are more clearly understood; when the wind and the rain, and the life and the death of man, are observed to follow as certain laws as the stone which falls to the ground or the rivers which find their way into the sea? And there will not be wanting those who will apply to this age the language of Scripture about the latter days in which deceivers 'will wax worse and worse,' who will, perhaps, hear in the very advance of knowledge the footfalls of a distant antichrist; who, when in the natural course of human things their own sect or party or opinion begins to decline, will imagine that the world too is coming to an end.

This is not the first, and will not be the last, age in which the Christian faith has seemed to be encircled with peculiar dangers. There have been many 'latter days' in the history of the Church: in the times of the Apostles themselves, as we gather from the Epistles of St. Paul and the Book of Revelation; in the tenth century, when men began to think that the world, for its misery, its wickedness, its violence, could no longer go on (in the description of which the great Catholic historian uses the remarkable expression, 'Christ was still in the ship, but asleep'); at the Reformation too, that great earthquake of Europe and of Christendom, the movement of which has hardly yet ceased, and

still seems to affect us from a distance; or, in the first French Revolution, when the highest hopes of mankind seemed to be suddenly cast down into the depths of despair. But there is a reflection which may tend to quiet the minds of those who live, or believe themselves to live, in times of trial or difficulty. It is this: All such times of movement and change have appeared different to those who have looked back upon them from afar and to those who were living in the midst of them. They have been seen by after ages more as a part of a larger whole, as having a great, but still only a subordinate, place in the scheme of Providence; the truth that was in them has been separated from the error; the temporary excitement has passed away, and the permanent result has appeared. And, if we could imagine some one living a hundred years hence, and looking back on our own age as we look back on past history, he would certainly see us and our times in a very different light from that in which we regard ourselves. Perhaps he might note that there were some questions which are now deemed very important, and which are not really important at all; he might observe that there were oppositions insisted on by us which were only oppositions of words; he might wonder at the obsolete violence of party spirit with which even good men attacked one another; and still he might recognize that, amid all our errors and divisions, we were being led in a way that we did not understand to

something deeper and truer than satisfied former ages.

This is one way of putting the question which may calm excited spirits. Let me suggest also another point of view which seems to reach deeper: Do we really suppose that the course of religion in the world is a return to darkness, not a progress towards light? Do we imagine that God has been governing the world for eighteen centuries since the giving of Christianity, communing with and inspiring the soul of man, and that during all that time He has given us no increased knowledge of the principles of His government, no wider conception of His purposes towards mankind? Have not history and physical science told us a great deal about Him, which could never have been known to former ages? And is God to be regarded as separable from nature, or the knowledge of Him from the knowledge of His works? Are there not rather clear and manifest instances in which the knowledge of nature has added to our knowledge of God?

For example: That nature is governed by fixed laws; that effects flow from causes, that the order of the divine work is visible, not only, as the ancients might have supposed, in the movements of the heavenly bodies, but also in the least things and the things which appear to be the most capricious ('even the very hairs of your head are all numbered'). This is a very great lesson which is being taught us daily

and hourly by the commonest observation, as well as by the latest results of science. Everywhere, as far as we can see or observe or decompose the world around us, the pressure of law is discernible. And even if there are some things which we cannot see, which are too subtle to be reached by the eye of man or the use of instruments, still we are right in supposing that the empire of law does not cease with them, but that, in the invisible corners of nature, as they may be termed, the same powers rule, giving order and arrangement to the least things as well as the greatest.

And does this recognition of order in external nature teach us nothing also of the divine nature, and of the moral government of the world? Is not God assuring us in this, by every token which He can give to man, that He will not interrupt His laws for our sakes? He will be with us in spirit, and support us and lead us through the valley and shadow of death, and take us to Himself. But He will not in the least degree alter the external conditions in which He has placed us. He will not change the nature or functions of the human frame, or the influences of dead, involuntary matter, to which we may be exposed. Through those conditions and in them, by the use of means and not without them, we work out our life in His service. Neither in what I have called the invisible corners does He act in any way different from His action in His greater works, such as the

rising of the sun, or the ebb and flow of the tides: but everywhere He has provided the empire of law, everywhere He is present Himself, in the least things as well as in the greatest, not acting partially or capriciously, but universally, not interfering but ordering; and the same to all men in all ages and countries, though they may have known, or may know, of His natural government no more than of His moral, like helpless children ignorant of the laws under which they live.

I have made these remarks as introductory to the subject of prayer, because prayer is sometimes thought to be inconsistent with any recognition of the order of nature. And, first, I shall endeavour to show that this, which I will not call the most philosophical view, but rather a plain matter of fact, really supplies the only basis of spiritual communion with God. And, secondly, I will consider the nature of prayer, either as the general spirit of the Christian life, or again as contained in special acts of the public and private worship of God. And, thirdly, I will try to say something of the hindrances and difficulties of prayer, whether as arising out of the evil of the human heart, or from peculiarities of temperament or character or education.

(1) What is required for any real prayer to God is not a lower notion of Him, but a higher; first, as the universal Lawgiver who has ordered all things once for all according to His wisdom; secondly, as

the universal Father who cannot possibly desire that one of His creatures should be favoured at the expense of another, any more than a human father who had the feelings of nature could desire that one of his children should die and another live. In the courts of earthly sovereigns there may be the preference of one person to another; but there are no such preferences with God. He who would make a request of this nature is already out of the presence of God; for he who comes to God must believe that He loves other men as well as himself. If we could imagine some one among us, some one who might be pointed out in this place, to be the special object of God's favour, he himself would reject such a notion as unworthy of the Being whom he wished to serve. He would not like to serve a god who had his favourites after the manner of an earthly potentate. Nor, again, could he wish that God should break the laws which He has laid down for him and all His creatures; that He should make an exception in his favour, that He should introduce disorder into the world for the sake of doing him some benefit. For he would consider that this exception to the law which was made on his behalf might be made on behalf of others; and then how could all the individual wishes of mankind be reconciled? And there would be no stopping until the world was framed on some different and other model, and wonders and fancies and special interventions to individuals took

the place of the divine order for all. Or how could he venture to ask that God should do for him what He had told him by every sign that He could give that He could not do for him? How could he dare to say, 'O Lord, make not Thy will to be mine, but make my will to be Thine'? Was ever such a prayer heard from the mouth of any human being, that the laws of the world should be broken for him, that God should do for him what He would refuse to do for any other?

Well, but some one will say, 'If you will not allow me to go to God with all my wishes and desires, you take away the nature of prayer.' What! because I cannot go to God and say to Him, 'O Lord, give me a fine house and estate; O Lord, make that last venture of mine to succeed; O Lord, give me that preferment or office, which I am so well entitled to, and which I could fill so admirably'—until you come down to the prayer of the beggar, 'O Lord, please give me eighteenpence'—is that really taking away the nature of prayer? Must I not think a bit before entering the courts of the sovereign, whether the petition is one that I ought to prefer; whether I may not be violating the very laws of the realm in asking that such a petition should be granted? Must I not, when I think of the nature of God, be careful that I ask something which is in accordance with His nature? Instead of lifting up earth to heaven, am I not rather seeking to bring down heaven to earth?

Well, but some one will say, 'May I not ask of God the life of some beloved relative who is in danger or at the point of death? I have a son who is fighting with the enemies of his country in India or in China; may I not ask that he shall be shielded, and that the deadly weapon that is aimed at him may not come near him?' Many a one has offered up such a prayer for an only son, many a father and many a mother, within the last year or two; and it seems hard to deny them this privilege of nature. Still, the voice of reason will be heard saying, 'Do not ask for your beloved son that which may be the death of the beloved of another'; think of your enemies sometimes as well as of your countrymen, as in the presence of God, who is the Father of them all, and will not take advantage of the sudden death of any of them, or take any of them at a catch, as has been rudely but truly said. Is He the God of the English only? Is He not the God of the Hindoo and the Chinaman? Does His mercy extend to Christians only, and not also to Jews, Turks, Infidels, Heretics, and all those for whom we pray in the collect for Good Friday; of the Soudanese, and of the Egyptian—not like Zeus or Osiris, or some Greek or other national deity, but the God of all nature and of all men? And, if the ambition of monarchs or the pride of nations were again to plunge us into a European war, if we were on the eve of a great conflict, when the continent of Europe was about to reel with the shock of

arms, and we could imagine the prayers of the two contending parties ascending in a figure before His throne, He could know of no favour to one or other of them except so far as their cause was just; He could not take their part because they prayed to Him; but rather we should think of Him as a father pitying His children in their quarrels, looking with a sort of strangeness on their wild and fierce game.

Nor, I think, can we pray that a pestilence or epidemic be driven from our shores and not also driven from other lands; for God requires us to think of our neighbours as well as of ourselves. Or better, perhaps, we may trust God, not that He will stay the plague in answer to our prayers on any particular occasion, but that He has so ordered these mysterious epidemics that, although their path is unseen like the wind, yet He has placed them to a certain degree in the power of man to prevent and avoid, and has provided that they shall not utterly exterminate man or beast.

Once more, to take another instance. Some one will perhaps say, 'I have a favourite daughter who is slowly and manifestly sinking into the grave; or, I have a wife or husband who is all in all to me; may I not ask God to spare their lives? May I not batter the gates of heaven with storms of prayer?' I will not answer this question. For sometimes human feelings cannot be reasoned with, and there would be a sort of impropriety in attempting to resist them.

But I would remind you that even in this case there may be a more excellent spirit. 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine be done.' And, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Thus then we seem to arrive at the conclusion that riches, or honour, or victory in war, or the acquirement of any temporal good, or the avoidance of any temporal evils, or any interference with the laws of nature or alteration in their effects, are not the proper or natural objects of prayer. We may take the means which will attain these objects; we may pray that God will enable us to use them aright, but we must not expect that God will overleap these means, not because He cannot, but because experience shows that this is not His way of dealing with His creatures. I am aware that all will not be willing to agree in this statement. But at any rate they will agree that the greater and more important object of prayer is spiritual rather than temporal good, and that the true field of prayer begins in the relation of the soul to God.

Regarding prayer not so much as consisting of particular acts of devotion, but as the spirit of life, it seems to be the spirit of harmony with the will of God. It is the aspiration after all good, the wish, stronger than any earthly passion or desire, to live in His service only. It is the temper of mind which

says in the evening, 'Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit'; which rises up in the morning, 'To do Thy will, O God'; and which all the day regards the actions of business and of daily life as done unto the Lord and not to men—'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' The trivial employments, the meanest or lowest occupations, may receive a kind of dignity when thus converted into the service of God. Other men live for the most part in dependence on the opinion of their fellow-men; they are the creatures of their own interests, they hardly see anything clearly in the mists of their own self-deceptions. But he whose mind is resting in God rises above the petty aims and interests of men; he desires only to fulfil the divine will, he wishes only to know the truth. His eye is single, in the language of Scripture, and his whole body is full of light. The light of truth and disinterestedness flows into his soul; the presence of God, like the sun in the heavens, warms his heart. Such a one, whom I have imperfectly described, may be no mystic; he may be one among us whom we know not, undistinguished by any outward mark from his fellow-men, yet carrying within him a hidden source of truth and strength and peace.

This is the life of prayer, or rather the life which is itself prayer, which is always raised above this world, and yet always on a level with this world; the life which has lost the sense or consciousness of self, and is devoted to God and to mankind, which may be

almost said to think the thoughts of God, as well as do His works. And this is the spirit which must also animate our separate acts of prayer, the spirit of simplicity and truth, the spirit of love and peace, the spirit which says, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' For acts of prayer are not mere repetitions, shorter or longer, of forms of words, or ceremonies with which we approach the majesty of heaven; but they are real requests which flow out of the nature and needs of man. 'Give me purity, give me truth; make me to understand knowledge; take from me all ill-will and egotism and selfish care; give me patience. Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done. In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust, now in the time of my youth when the snares of this world are encompassing me, now again in the time of my age when my strength fails and I go out whither I know not.' Can a man live too much in this spirit? Or can there be a higher exercise of the reason than this?

I think that we may see this to be the true nature of prayer, because there can never be any excess of such prayers, there can never be any doubt about the answer to them, there can never be any conflict of interests between one man and another. For the fulfilment of the will of God in this world is not a particular thing which may be granted to one man and not to another, not a private good or benefit, but a universal good which is inexhaustible, and, like the ocean, can never be dried up. I do not go on year

after year praying for something which is never granted me, and then finding a late and unsatisfactory explanation that if my request had been good God would have granted it, when the truth is that I have overlooked the very first conditions of His dealings with His creatures. Such prayers are necessarily hollow and formal; they are always at variance with experience, and we are only half-satisfied with our explanation of them. But the prayer that we may fulfil the will of God, passively in submitting to Him, actively in working with Him, has a real answer, and is the answer to itself; there can never be any doubt that God wills that we should fulfil His will; there can never be any doubt that the prayer to Him, the communion with Him, will draw us to Him.

And, if I may refer once more to those doubts and difficulties which were spoken of at the commencement of this sermon, I think that to a person living in this spirit they will seem to be hardly of more importance than questions of secular knowledge. For he knows that he cannot be robbed of a part who has the whole. Neither can he ever desire that something should appear to be the truth which is not the truth; or that some question of criticism should be decided in this way rather than in that; or that his own church or sect or party should prevail to the exclusion of any other. His soul has too deep a peace to be shaken by such imaginary terrors. And, even if we could imagine a time when 'neither in Jerusalem nor in

this mountain should men worship the Father,' when rival churches and local institutions should be broken up and pass away, still he would feel that God was a Spirit, and that the true worshippers of Him must worship in spirit and in truth, and that under the shadow of His will he would be safe amid the changes of human things.

There is yet another aspect in which prayer may be regarded, as the language which the soul uses to God —the mode of expression in which she pours out her thoughts to Him, just as ordinary language is the expression of our ordinary thoughts and gives clearness and distinctness to them. Let not our words be many, but simple and few; not using vain repetitions or indulging in vague emotions; not allowing ourselves in fantastic practices; but self-collected, firm, clear; not deeming that mere self-abasement can give any pleasure to God any more than to an earthly monarch. And above all let us be truthful, seeking to view ourselves and our lives as in His presence, neither better than we are nor worse than we are, making our prayers the first motive and spring of all our actions; and sometimes passing before God in our mind's eye all those with whom we are in any way connected, that we may be better able to do our duty towards them and more ready to think of them all in their several ranks and stations as the creatures of God equally with ourselves, each one having a life and being and affections as valuable to himself and

to God as our own. Neither should we forget sometimes to pray that God may clear away from our souls all error and prejudice—'The mind through all its powers Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mists from thence Purge and disperse'; and that, as years go on and our faculties in the course of nature become weaker and narrower, and our limbs are old and our blood runs cold, instead of creeping into ourselves we may still be expanding like the flower before the sun in the divine presence, and cheered by the warmth of the divine love.

But some one will say, 'I do not understand this language of prayer; I cannot attend when I hear prayers; I never learned to pray when I was young and I am too old to learn now'; or, 'I have lost the habit and cannot recover it; and yet I truly desire to do the will of God and use the powers which He has given me in His service.' There are perhaps some in this congregation who may be fairly described in these words. What shall we say to them? I think that we must admit that the habit and use of set times of prayer is partly a Christian duty, but is partly also a matter of temperament and education. Nor must we be too hard in insisting that a man should order his life in this or that particular way; or that the means which are right and natural for most men should be enforced necessarily on all. It is unchristian to judge of a man by this or that part of his life, instead of judging him on the whole. And, if a man's

life and actions are Christian, I would rather claim him as a Christian, even though he said he was not, than excommunicate him because he did not follow the religious usages of Christians in general; for there is no one whose life and character in any degree resembles the life and character of Christ who is really His enemy.

Still I would say to such a one, 'Do not live without God in the world, even in the sense of duty, even in the strength of right.' Consider how short and dependent life is, how unfit man is to stand alone, how ignorant of the possibilities beyond. Think of yourself in sickness, in sorrow, in despair, when the nearest human ties are broken, when you are passing into the unseen world,—are you prepared to stand alone then? Do you not need some bond of union with your fellow-creatures more expansive, more enduring, than the chance association with them in society or in business? Do you not feel that amid all the jarring influences of opinion, amid all the changing and seemingly opposing paths of knowledge, you need the support of a God of truth to keep your mind fixed upon the light of truth? Is not this a higher ideal of life than the stoicism of merely human virtue? Is not this a new power of thought and action which is imparted to you?

I will not attempt further to determine in detail in what way some one who approaches the religion of Christ from without shall work out his own life.

Perhaps that is better left to himself. Let him make the actions of his life take the place of prayers if he will; let him find another road, through the order of nature or the sense of right, to the acknowledgement of an Author of Nature. He cannot, perhaps, altogether define his meaning or impression. Let us say 'Forbid him not'; seeking to find in all things and with all men everywhere, not lines of division but bonds of union, not differences but agreements, not the distinctions of Christians or of parties but the love of God fulfilling Himself in many ways.

And once more, returning to ourselves and summing up what has been said, I would ask you to think of prayer, first, as the spirit of the Christian life; 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of'; but they are not temporal benefits or interruptions of the laws of nature. Secondly, I would ask you to think of prayer as the great means which God has given us; the means which sets in motion all other means that are used for the good of man and for the fulfilment of the divine will. Thirdly, as the highest expression not merely of the feelings but of the reason when exercised in the contemplation of the Divine Being.

O Lord, make not my will to be Thine, but Thy will to be mine, O Lord.

XVI

THE PROPHETIC SPIRIT[1].

THE SPIRIT OF GOD MOVED UPON THE FACE OF THE WATERS.

GENESIS i. 2.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD GOD IS UPON ME; BECAUSE THE LORD HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH GOOD TIDINGS UNTO THE MEEK; HE HATH SENT ME TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED, TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES, AND THE OPENING OF THE PRISON TO THEM THAT ARE BOUND.

ISAIAH lxi. 1.

LOOKING back on the history of the world, we observe long periods in which mankind appear to have been stationary. Great empires like Egypt or China remain the same for two thousand or for three thousand years; the external framework of their institutions exercises a paralyzing influence on their life and spirit; their religions continue merely because they are ancient, their works of art are always cast in the same form, their laws and customs are like chains too strong for the puny arm of the individual to break. Still more true is all this, as far as we can

[1] Preached at Westminster Abbey, July 2, 1876.

conjecture, of prehistoric times about which we know so little. Though there were wars and migrations among primitive men, they remained for the most part in the same condition; there was hardly more progress among them than among the animals. Even in our own age of industrial and political activity we become unexpectedly aware of times of reaction: the force which seemed strong enough to revolutionize a world is suddenly arrested and brought to a stop in the midst of its career. Countries, like individuals, are always in danger of falling back into apathy and repose. So that, if some persons speak to us of a law of progress in human affairs, others will seem rather to discern in them a law of rest; not everything going forward, but everything standing still—not 'the new is ever entwined with the old,' but 'there is nothing new under the sun.' And certainly we must admit that the times of progress and improvement have been few and far between: the day-spring from on high has visited mankind at intervals. Every individual who has sought to do good in his generation has probably made the reflection: 'How little impression he has left upon the forces arrayed against him! hardly more than the husbandman on the solid framework of the earth.'

Yet there have been also times in which the fountains of the deep may be said to have been broken up; and new lights have dawned upon men, new truths about politics, about morality, about religion,

which have become the inheritance of after ages. In general the progress of mankind has not been gradual but sudden, like the burst of summer in some ice-bound clime. Still less has it been a common effort of the whole human race. If we take away two nations from the history of the world; if we imagine further that the six greatest among the sons of men were blotted out, or had never been; the peoples of the earth would still be 'sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.' The two nations were among the fewest of all people: scarcely in their most flourishing period together amounting to a hundredth part of the human race. The golden age of either of them can hardly be said to extend over two or three centuries. The nations themselves were not good for much; but single men among them have been the teachers, not only of their own, but of all ages and countries. If the Greek philosophers had never existed, is it too much to say that the very nature of the human mind would have been different? We can hardly tell when or how the sciences would have come into being; many elements of religion as well as of law would have been wanting; the history of nations would have changed. So mighty has been the influence of two or three men in thought and speculation—the world has gone after them.

But even more striking, because more familiar to us, has been the influence of the Jewish prophets on the character of mankind. Living on a narrow spot of earth between the great empires of Assyria and

Egypt, which seemed so imposing in their antiquity and external greatness, they had the force of mind to see beyond them, and beyond the existence of their own Jewish nation. Great as was the power of Assyria and of Egypt, they knew and were convinced that they were as nothing before the power of God. Already they saw the seeds of ruin in them: 'their garments were moth-eaten,' their palaces crumbling in the dust. For they were persuaded that no kingdom could be lasting which was not founded on righteousness and the fear of God. These are what we may call in modern language their principles of politics and religion. They taught men the true nature of God, that He was a God of love as well as of justice, the Father as well as the judge of mankind. They saw Him sweeping the earth with His judgements, and yet ever willing to have mercy on those who bowed to Him. They knew that He could not be pleased with external rites or ceremonies. 'Lo, O man, He hath shown thee what He requireth of thee; to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.' They raised their voice against tyranny and hypocrisy, against luxury and vice, against the foreign superstitions which were imported into Israel. And, though confined within the limits of the Jewish people and without experience of the rest of the world, they saw in the distance the vision of a perfect God 'having the body of heaven in His clearness.'

And now everywhere in Christian countries their

words have sunk deep into the heart of the human race. If the logical and intellectual framework of the human mind may be said to have been constructed by the Greek philosophers, the moral feelings of men have been deepened and strengthened, and also softened and almost created by the Jewish prophets. In modern times we hardly like to acknowledge the full force of their words, lest they should prove subversive to society. And so we explain them away or spiritualize them, and convert what is figurative into what is literal, and what is literal into what is figurative. And still, after all our interpretation or misinterpretation, whether due to a false theology or to imperfect knowledge of the original language, the force of the words remains; and a light of heavenly truth and love streams from them even now (more than 2500 years after they were first uttered) to the uneducated and ignorant, to the widow or the orphan, when they read the words, 'Who hath believed our report?' and 'Comfort ye my people.'

I propose to speak to you in this sermon of the Jewish prophets, who are so distant from us and yet so near to us: whose words carry us back to an ancient and forgotten world, and also come home to the heart and conscience of each of us. And, first, I shall consider the character of the prophet regarded as a teacher of mankind; secondly, I shall inquire how far in modern times, and even in ordinary life, there may be anything akin to the spirit of prophecy. For

the same things sometimes exist under different names, and moral or intellectual gifts take different forms in different ages. There have been a few in all ages who have felt themselves irresistibly impelled to utter the truths of which they were persuaded; who have fought hopeless causes; who seem to have lost all feeling of themselves in their devotion to their country or to mankind. The term 'prophet' is no longer applied to them; they are not distinguished from their fellow men by any external note in their way of life. We hardly recognize the analogy until after they are dead, and then we sometimes find that they have received a 'prophet's reward.' Such men have been the leaders of movements among ourselves, on behalf of the prisoner or the slave, or the extension of education, or the spread of religious truth. They have been found equally among the clergy and the laity. The characteristic of them has been that in one direction at least they have seen further, and that their moral sense has been higher, than that of the community at large.

And now, returning to the Jewish prophet, we may begin by setting aside a common error in the conception of him, viz. that he was a foreteller of future events in that lower sense in which a Roman soothsayer would have been supposed to foretell them, or as in modern times indications of the future are sometimes supposed to have been made by 'second sight.' Whether in any instance he passed the horizon of

his real insight into the future; whether there are any prophecies which remain unfulfilled, as, for example, the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, is a question which we cannot determine certainly. For, though we may interpret prophecy by history, we must not interpret history by prophecy. Doubtless many applications were made of the prophet's words, both by the writers of the New Testament and the early Fathers, which never came within the range of his thoughts. I notice this chiefly that we may set it aside as unimportant. The prophet was, and he was not, a foreteller of future events. He was, in so far as he saw more deeply into the laws of the world around him: he was not, in the sense which excites the vulgar credulity and admiration of mankind. At least, if there is anything of this kind observable anywhere in particular passages, it is not the essential element of Jewish prophecy. And the connexion of the Old Testament and the New is not one of types and words, but the identity of the truths contained in them—Isaiah and Micah in the Old Testament declaring that there should be 'no more vain oblations,' our Lord and St. Paul revealing the spiritual nature of God in the New.

There are some other points belonging to what we may call the externals of prophecy which may now be briefly noted. In the first place, the prophets as they have come down to us form a literature which goes back to a time when there was no written prophecy.

Their utterances were gradually committed to writing; and in after ages the sayings of different prophets were collected in the same volume and bore the same title. In the Book of Zechariah the traces of at least two authors are universally admitted; in the Book of Isaiah the traces of several appear; for we can no more suppose that the words 'Thus saith the Lord unto my well-beloved Cyrus' were composed before the Captivity, than we can imagine, as was the belief of many of the Fathers, that the Psalm beginning 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down' was the writing of David. In the second place, the later prophecies are to some extent formed upon the earlier. The latest of them all, the Book of Revelation, or the Book of the day of the Lord, as it has also been called, is largely made up of words and symbols taken from the older prophets, as the marginal references abundantly testify. Even the prophet Isaiah contains a repetition of Micah; Amos refers to Joel, and the Book of Joel, probably the oldest of the extant prophecies, has a reference to still earlier writings which are now lost. And perhaps we shall not be far wrong in supposing that the prophets who are only known to us from the historical books, Elijah and Elisha, as they left a deeper impress in Jewish history, were also greater than any of those whose writings have come down to us. On the other hand the later prophets seem to be less bound within the horizon of Jewish thought, and to be uttering truths in form at least more universal and more adapted

to all ages and countries. Probably they began to write down their words in a book or roll when they were rejected by their own generation.

And now let us endeavour to form an idea of the prophet in his true character, stripped of the literary accidents which surround him. He is the revealer of the will of God to man. And the will of God is in one word 'righteousness'—holiness of life in the individual, the triumph of right in the world. He is the voice of one crying, sometimes in the wilderness, sometimes in the city, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord'; he is possessed, inspired, with the word of God. He does not reason about the truths which he utters, for they are self-evident to him. He is fulfilled with the power and goodness of God, with the greatness and with the gentleness of the divine nature. Take for example the twenty-fifth chapter of Isaiah: after the judgements of God, as elsewhere, immediately follow His mercies. 'Thou hast made of a city a heap; of a defenced city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city'; and yet in the following verses, 'Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat'; and then come the words, 'He shall swallow up death in victory; the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces': so near do His judgements and loving-kindnesses lie together. This is the lesson which the prophets are always teaching, that there is no end of His justice, and there is

no end of His mercy. They present the divine nature almost in the form of contradictions, now entreating, now threatening, now consoling, now punishing; and the human heart bears witness to both aspects, and both seem to appear in the order and government of the world. And so too in later ages men have spoken of the love of God as opposed to His justice; or as though, if I may use such an expression, God were just with one part of His mind and at one time, and loving with another part of His mind and at another time. Yet there is also a higher view which may be gathered from the prophets themselves, that His justice is ever regulated by His love, and His love by His justice, and that these two are in reality identical and inseparable. But we, seeing through a glass darkly, and able only to look at one side at a time, imagine the opposition, instead of reflecting that His justice and mercy, one and indivisible, encircle us both in this world and in another.

The justice of God is seen by the prophets in His judgement on Israel and on the world. The history of the world is the judgement of the world. 'The day of the Lord' is the burden of prophecy; from Joel the earliest of the prophets, to Malachi the latest, the prophets are still waiting for 'the great and terrible day of the Lord,' as in the New Testament the first believers are still waiting for the coming of the Lord. They watch the great empires of the old world passing into ruin; in these are anticipations of the greater

judgement which is to come; as again in the New Testament the second coming of Christ is blended with the destruction of Jerusalem. But still the great day of all is at a distance; and one by one the prophets, like other men, pass from the scene. The judgement is begun but not completed here, and has an anticipation in the consciences of men. There remains therefore a more perfect justice for all mankind.

So the mercy of God is also shown by the prophet in His dealings with His people Israel. The Jewish religion was national; Israel had not arrived at the point of seeing that all men equally, Gentiles as well as Jews, were in the hands of God and subject to His laws. So individuals in modern times have imagined themselves to be the chosen servants of God, and, indeed, it is hard for any of us to realize that another is equally with himself the care of a divine providence. The vision of the Jewish prophet was limited in like manner. Though in one or two passages Israel makes a third with Assyria and Egypt, yet in general the love of God is concentrated on His chosen people. They alone say to Him, 'Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, whose name is from everlasting.' Yet it is to be observed also that the relation of God to Israel is not one of favouritism. When they sin He visits them with His judgements, when they return to Him

He has mercy on them. When His arm is heaviest upon them still a remnant are left, for 'He will not destroy the righteous with the wicked; that be far from Him.' And so the prophets, reflecting on the nature of God, arrive at last at the conclusion, not that 'the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children,' but that 'henceforth there shall be no more this proverb in the House of Israel, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge, but every soul shall bear his own iniquity,' and that, 'when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness he shall save his soul alive.' Even the very judgements which are affirmed to have been executed by the command of God are in some instances corrected, as for example the massacre of Jehu, in Hosea i. 4, where it is said 'Yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel,' that is, of Jezebel and the sons of Ahab, 'on the house of Jehu.'

The prophet lives with God rather than with his fellow-men; and he is confident that the word which he speaks is the word of God. Suddenly he feels an irresistible impulse to declare that which he knows. Naturally we ask the question, how he could be sure that the voice of God speaking or seeming to speak within him was not a mere illusion. For we sometimes ask ourselves too, how we can be sure that such and such actions or such and such beliefs are the truth and will of God. How do we distinguish them from the fancies of our own minds? And the answer

in both cases is the same, that we know them to be the truth and will of God in proportion as they express the highest idea of truth, of justice, and of love which we are capable of forming in our own minds. But in most men there is but a feeble sense of the power and goodness of God; they do as other men do, seldom deriving any light or strength from their knowledge of His nature or character. They do not live in His presence, or refer their actions to His laws, or judge of the world, of other men, and of themselves by the standard of His perfections.

Once more: the Jewish prophets were the first teachers of spiritual religion. In all ages and countries the outward has been tending to prevail over the inward, the Law over the Gospel, the local and temporal over the spiritual and eternal. The world takes the place of the Church, or rather the Church becomes a new world, an earthly kingdom, a system of discipline and government, in which the old foes appear under new names, and ambition and avarice are as rife as in kingdoms of the world. Then comes an individual conscious of a mission from on high, and seeks to restore the lost purity of religion, such as St. Bernard, the reformer of the Monastic Orders, or John Huss and Savonarola, the forerunners of the Reformation, or Luther in the century that followed, or at a later time our own John Wesley. Then a voice is heard in Europe saying: 'Let us have no more penances or indulgences or priestly absolution or

masses for quick and dead; we are justified by faith only, without rites and ceremonies.' Or again, 'We will have no more formalism or lip-service, we feel that we have sinned against God and have need of reconcilement with Him.'

So we might translate into modern language the first chapter of the book of the prophet Isaiah.

'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?' saith the Lord, 'I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.' 'Your hands are full of blood.' 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' This is the very spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of true religion, that we should cease to do evil and learn to do well, that we should not only repent but bring forth fruits meet for repentance, that we should make clean not that which is without, but that which is within, that is to say the heart and conscience of men.

And ever and anon the prophet looks forward to

a future which is not, but always is to be, a vision of the kingdom of God in distant ages, in far-off lands, whether in this world or in another he cannot tell. This is the day when 'the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted in the top of the mountains'; when 'the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.' But as yet the justice of God and the love of God are but half revealed. The world is distracted between good and evil, the evil seeming often to preponderate over the good. And in this mixed scene of good and evil the prophet beholds the image of a Saviour, a Redeemer, the servant of God, who partakes of the sufferings of man, who 'has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,' who 'is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb'; who is exalted of God because 'he is despised and rejected of men.' There is one in whom the struggle and the final victory is impersonated, in whom all the sins and sorrows of mankind are represented, who shall justify them and himself. In such manner is described the life of Him 'to whom bear all the prophets witness.'

And now, leaving the Jewish prophets, I will briefly consider the second head concerning which I proposed to speak: 'whether anything akin to the spirit of prophecy can exist among ourselves. For naturally we think of the prophet as an extraordinary man, gifted with strange powers of language and insight.

And perhaps some of us would shrink from saying 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.' Yet something like prophecy seems to enter into all true religion.

For in all true religion or philosophy there must be a willingness to resist the evil customs of men, whether in the church or in the world, an insight which enables individuals to see through them, and a courage which will fight against them even though they may be a part of the established order of society in which we live. He who is independent in thought and mind, who knows no other rule but the divine law, who habitually thinks of the world and of himself and other men, of the ranks of society, of the opinions of parties, of the trifles of fashion, as they appear in the sight of God, he who in politics knows no other principles but truth and right, and is confident that amid all appearances to the contrary they must triumph at the last, has in him the spirit of a prophet.

Again, in all true religion there must be a zeal against hypocrisy and oppression, on behalf of humanity and justice; and if the fire burns within a man he must at last speak with his tongue. He who cannot remain silent when any injustice is being done, who feels irresistibly impelled, perhaps in ordinary conversation, to lift up his voice against some pernicious or immoral sentiment; who, when other men are struggling in some cause of justice or

humanity, becomes their natural leader; into whose ears the crying of the prisoner or the slave first enters; who will spend a lifetime in the detection of some wrong done to the fatherless and widow; or who is convinced that he must speak out some truth which all the world are either denying or veiling in ambiguities, no matter at what cost to his worldly fame or prospects; he too has in him the elements of a hero and of a prophet.

Once more, in all religion, at least in any deeper kind of religion, there must be isolation from the world, that we may be alone with God. The religious thinker or teacher is no longer liable to be persecuted for his opinions, he is not like the olden prophets 'wandering about in sheep skins and goat skins'; yet any man who thinks or feels deeply is always liable to find himself more or less estranged from his fellow men. They cannot enter into his thoughts, nor can he join always in their trivial and passing interests. Like the prophet he has to go into the wilderness that he may be alone with God. And through God he is brought back to his fellowmen with higher motives and aspirations for their good; he feels them to be his brethren, and is bound to them, not merely by earthly ties of family or friendship, but by a Divine love for them because they are God's creatures, to whom he is bound to impart the truth which he knows and every other good gift which he has received. He who is thus reunited in

God to his fellow-men; who from some eminence of thought or knowledge or position has come down to be the servant of all that he may be the saviour of all, and who not without suffering has carried out this endeavour to his life's end (if there be such an one), has in him the spirit not of a prophet but of Christ Himself.

Lastly, my brethren, all things in this world are so imperfect that it sometimes seems as if the promises of the future were never realized. Many form ideals in youth—for that is the time of hope and prophecy; and at forty or fifty, when they see that their ideals were not attainable, they lose faith and heart, because they appear to have failed. Even those who have succeeded to the utmost in the worldly sense of success will sometimes tell us how small the whole result is—'Vanity of vanities': a few years spent in education, a few years in preparation for a profession, a few years of disappointment or of brilliant success and fortune, and then the end: such is the life of man. But all this is no reason for relinquishing our ideals, or imagining that we have been mocked by them. They have been the best, the eternal part of our lives, and are not to be deemed failures because they have been only partially realized. For without them human life would be lowered, and we ourselves and men in general would be sensibly degraded. They are not failures, but efforts after perfection, necessarily involving some degree of imperfection. If ever the

hopes and ideals of youth are combined with the wisdom and experience of maturer life, such a union is fraught with blessings to mankind. Enthusiasm is a gift of God, not to be repressed, but to be dissected and purged of its lighter and weaker elements. Even the folly of the enthusiast is generally wiser than the wisdom of the cynic. We know too that the work which begins here is not ended here. He who in later life retains the ideals of his early days; who has not ceased to hope and believe because he has ceased to be young; who deems that the next generation will be better than his own, having more experience and fewer prejudices; who looking back on the imperfections of his own life looks forward to another in which he will see the ways and do the works of God more perfectly; who, when darkness is closing in upon him, has his eye fixed on the light beyond, has in him the mind and spirit of a prophet.

XVII

THE LORD'S SUPPER[1].

HOW CAN THIS MAN GIVE US HIS FLESH TO EAT?

IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENETH; THE FLESH PROFITETH NOTHING: THE WORDS THAT I SPEAK UNTO YOU, THEY ARE SPIRIT, AND THEY ARE LIFE.

JOHN vi. 52, 63.

THE sayings of our Lord seem to have been often misunderstood by those who heard Him. When He spoke to them of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, they either scoffingly said, or really imagined, that He was going to give them His flesh to eat; at least, such is the impression conveyed in the narrative of St. John. When He told the woman of Samaria of the water of life, her thought reverted only to the water of the well of Jacob, which she and others were drawing for daily use: when He cautioned His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, they supposed that He was referring to the leaven of bread; when He urged upon Nicodemus the necessity of being born again, the 'Master of Israel' was puzzled

[1] Preached at Balliol, 1869.

and could only answer, 'Can any man enter again his mother's womb and be born?' These instances are taken from the Gospel of St. John, who intends to show by them how near the commonplace interpretation of the sayings of Christ was to the minds of men, how difficult the spiritual one; and not only in the Gospel of St. John, but in the other Gospels, there are sayings of Christ, such as 'Let the dead bury their dead'; or the intimation of the resurrection given by God to Moses at the burning bush; or such precepts as 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness'; or the awful warning, 'Whoso sinneth against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven'; the meaning of which must have slumbered in the ears of those who heard them.

The words originally narrated and figuratively applied in the Gospel of St. John, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again,' are afterwards repeated again in the other three Gospels at the trial before the chief priests, and are taken by the witnesses in the literal meaning. Many other sayings were evidently misunderstood by those who heard them; and for this reason among others, many, or rather I should say, perhaps the greater part of them, have perished.

And not only during the life of Christ have His sayings been misunderstood, or wilfully misinterpreted, but in a still greater degree in later ages of the Church. One age after another has added to them, until they

have been buried under a heap of misrepresentations, and the meaning which is assigned to them has been in some cases the very reverse of that which they originally bore; and then some one has arisen who has dug them up again, and they have still been found capable of giving life to men. The great sayings of the world seem to be always in a process of being lost and being recovered.

Two or three words are a little instrument with which to stir an age, and yet the world has been stirred by them—such words, for example, as 'Believe on Me,' or 'We are justified by faith without the works of the law.' And then they have soon become a form again, and have no longer found the answering note in the heart of man; because, instead of interpreting them naturally, mankind have brought to the interpretation of them their own impressions or the tendencies of their age or Church or their party in the Church, or the authority of some Father or favourite teacher; or they have overlaid the New Testament with the Old, or gone back from the spirit to the letter. If any tenet has previously taken possession of their minds, they have found in some oriental figure, some chance coincidence, some remote analogy, the assurance of that which they had always determined to believe. I propose to consider in this sermon a subject about which there has been almost more misrepresentation of these simple words of Scripture than about any other, the Communion of the Lord's

Supper. Without entering into the controversy which has prevailed respecting this great rite of the Christian Church, I shall inquire whether a simpler notion of the Communion may not be more in accordance with the Spirit of Christ, and more really satisfying to the wants of human nature; secondly, I shall speak of the thoughts which naturally arise in our minds on those solemn occasions when we meet together at the table of the Lord, and recall the memory of Him whilst He was on earth.

In every Christian congregation there are a few to whom the participation in the Communion is the life or centre of their religious being; while the greater number (and there may be among them many who are equally the followers of Christ), either from awe or shyness, or the fear of unreality, or from their sense of the great change which has been made in the nature of the act, appear to be unable or unwilling to fulfil the last request of Christ, 'Do this in remembrance of Me.'

The words 'This is My Body,' 'This is My Blood,' have occasioned controversies and speculation such as no metaphysician can ever explain. Who can tell us the difference between transubstantiation and consubstantiation unless he can first analyse the meaning of the words 'substance'? Who can give the faintest conception of a real presence, or a real spiritual presence of a divine nature in a material object?

Behold! He is present everywhere, and especially

in the heart and reason of man. Are not such distinctions like lines drawn upon an imaginary surface, or a picture painted in space? and they lead us on by a sort of dialectical process immediately to raise other questions which are not less difficult. In what manner, and by what means, is the change in the elements affected, and at what time is their nature altered? at their consecration, or after we have partaken only? And do all partake of them, or the worthy recipients only? And has the minister, who is a man like ourselves, the power of granting or withholding the greatest of spiritual benefits, of making, and offering, (I hardly dare use the words) the Body and Blood of Christ? Then follows the transfer of all the powers of the life to come to a human being, and you have a lever long enough to move the world.

Owing to a corruption, beginning you can hardly say when, in an excess of religious feeling, the moral character of religion is lost; and the Sacrament, instead of being the simple bond which unites Christians to their brethren and to Christ, becomes the bond of a great ecclesiastical power.

Some persons may be inclined to feel angry or aggrieved at the plainness of these statements; and certainly we should do injustice to the maintainers of these views (of whom there seem to be many among the clergy of our own Church) if we did not admit that there was another side to them.

In tracing the decline of good into evil we should

be wrong in not observing that the good inseparably clings to the evil, and yet is somehow not infected by it. Certainly it is with strange and mixed feelings that we read such books as the *Life of St. Bernard*, or *St. Theresa*, or the meditations on the Sacrament in the fourth book of the *Imitation of Christ*. For, although we know that to ourselves individually, and still more to the world at large, goodness is a very dear bargain when purchased at the expense of truth, yet we see something in the lives and thoughts of these men and women which we would gladly transfer to our own lives, and for which, in this degenerate age, we vainly seem to look; and to them the very spirit and essence of religion was felt to be concentrated in the Eucharist. From the act of partaking of the bread and wine the rest of their spiritual life appeared to flow; they were full of rapture and fear, of sorrow and joy, at the same instant; they saw and heard things of which they could hardly speak to others, seeming to lose the sense of mortality in the immediate presence of Christ. This was the food of men leading a superhuman life, taking no thought of this world or of themselves, but caring only for the good of other men, and for the service of Christ. There is a great deal for us to sympathize with and to reverence in this; and, although we feel that no good, or rather great evil, would arise from the attempt to revive the feelings of the fourth, or the eleventh, or the thirteenth century in the nineteenth, yet we shall

do well also to separate these ideals of Christian life, these higher types of character and feeling, from the accidents which accompanied them, or the fantastic thoughts in which they clothed themselves. Men are apt to think that they cannot have too much of a good thing, too much piety, too much religious feeling, too much attendance at the public worship of God. They forget the truth which the old philosophy taught, that the life of man should be a harmony; not absorbed in any one thought, even of God, or in any one duty or affection, but growing up as a whole to the fulness of the perfect man. That is a maimed soul which loves goodness and has no love of truth, or which loves truth and has no love of goodness. The cultivation of one part of religion to the exclusion of another seems often to exact a terrible retribution both in individual characters and in churches. There is a nemesis of believing all things, or indeed of any degree of intellectual dishonesty, which sometimes ends in despair of all truth; there is an ecstasy of religious devotion which has not unfrequently degenerated into licentiousness. And in the same city, and in the same church in which the streaming eyes of saints have been uplifted to the image of Christ hanging over the altar, there have been 'acts of faith' of another kind, which are not obscurely connected with these ardours of divine love, in which the voice of pity and of every other human feeling is silenced.

(2) And now I will leave the history of the past and the controversies of the present, and try to consider this Communion of the Lord's Supper in a simpler manner. If a father on his deathbed had told his sons to meet together on a certain day of the year at a feast, and to remember him, and to think that he was present with them, how strange would their conduct appear if, after a year or two, they fell to disputing about the nature of this feast, or the meaning of their father in desiring that they should remember him and that they should think of him as present with them! Should we not tell them that they ought to interpret his words naturally, the simple words literally, the figure of speech after the manner of figures of speech? Or if a dying person had left us a ring to be a memorial of him, should we ever think of discussing how the ring recalled him to our memory? No more need we discuss at length how the Communion of the Lord's Supper reminds us of Christ.

And first of all we may note in passing (though a truism) that the Communion is not an end, but a means. 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' And the end of this institution of Christ was not that we should go to the Communion as to some mystic rite, but that in this act we should find the natural expression of our love and remembrance of Him.

There seems to be no better explanation of the

Sacraments than this, that they are the expressions of a religious feeling. The Sacrament of Baptism is not designed to draw an invidious line between baptized and unbaptized infants, but to express the Christian consciousness about all infants that they are the children of God, and that, in the language of our Lord, 'Their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.' The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in like manner, is not separable from the rest of the believer's life. He is always desirous to follow Christ and to be one with Him, and to be as He was in this world. Of that hope and aspiration, so much above the ordinary life of man, of that prayer and vow, the Communion is the highest, the intensified expression. And, as men find a relief in the utterance of their feelings, so does he find a relief in the conscious acknowledgement that his highest desire in this world is to be perfect, to be like Christ. And, as men after a long and weary toil will meet together at a feast to refresh their spirits and to bind closer the bonds of friendship, so does he go to the table of the Lord that he may draw closer the bonds which unite him to Christ, that like Christ he may forgive his enemies, like Christ he may live only for the good of others, like Christ he may be pure and disinterested in word and thought, and have communion with goodness and truth everywhere.

To such a feast we are invited—I will not say to a feast of ideas, but to a feast of Christian thoughts and feelings, in which, if I may use such an expression, we indulge the higher elements of our nature, and seem to have a foretaste of heaven. And in this way the Sacraments adjust themselves to the rest of the Christian life. They are spiritual, and the thing signified by them is not necessarily connected with any external act. They are the parts of a whole from which they cannot safely be separated. They are the points or limits in which the Christian life is gathered up. But they are not the instruments by which any change is wrought in us. That can only be accomplished in rational beings by the Spirit of God working together with our spirits. To think otherwise would be to disregard that which seems to lie deepest of all in the teaching of Christ and of St. Paul, deeper far than the institution of any ordinance, or the belief in any fact—the spiritual nature of religion.

And now I will speak of the feelings with which we approach the Communion; and these I suppose will vary considerably with the character and circumstances of each individual. In all devotion there is a common element, but there is also a private part, in which the mind of each one wanders over the mazes of time, and the secret history of his own life, and the thousand things concerning him which are known to himself only and to God. And, as we recognize our universal

relation to God and to Christ, we are conscious also that thoughts arise up within us which we can never impart to any other.

And, first of all, we seem to feel at the Communion that we are passing into the presence of God, and laying before Him our lives and actions. That which always is a fact we solemnly and distinctly acknowledge. We say to Him and to ourselves, 'There is not a word in our tongue or a thought in our hearts, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether'; or again, 'Oh cleanse Thou me from secret faults, let them not have the dominion over me.' And, knowing that He sees all things, we try to speak to Him as truly and simply as we can, not excusing nor yet accusing ourselves more than we ought, nor using the unreal words of momentary feeling, but beseeching Him to guide us in the main purpose of our lives, that our work may also be His work, and that we may fulfil His will upon earth,—'Not my will, but Thine, be done.' And, although God is at an infinite distance from us, and we are lost in the contemplation of Him, yet we know also that, like ourselves, He is a rational Being, a Divine Reason, in whom all our highest thoughts and feelings find a response. And the sense of communion with Him is not to lay us prostrate before Him, grovelling in the dust as before some eastern potentate who is only half governed by the dictates of truth and justice; but to raise us up and ennoble us, and awaken in us a sense of the higher

dignity, of the true dignity, of human nature, which is to be engaged in His service.

A man is not less but more of a man because he rests upon God. And a man is not less but more of a man because he knows himself and can make a true estimate of himself. Even the man of the world will acknowledge this; and true Christian manhood seems to require that we should look ourselves steadily in the face, remembering our sins, not extenuating our faults, nor yet over excited or depressed by them, but making this consciousness of what we truly are the foundation of a higher life in us. This is the sort of consciousness which we desire to carry into the presence of God, beseeching Him to strengthen the good and to purge away the bad in us, that before our life in this world ends we may be fitted for another.

And this, again, is a thought which naturally recurs to us at the Communion, or whenever we think of God, that He alone is able to support us in the hour of death. Over all the accidents of life, and the fears of our hearts, and the difficulties of our own characters, and the remembrances of shame and pain, and the uncertainties of human things shaking like leaves in the wind, there is One who remains immovable, who is our Friend and Father; and in that thought we have peace and strength.

Secondly, there is present with us at the Communion the image of the life of Christ as He appeared

to man while upon earth. The Scripture speaks of our being dead with Christ, or of our having a life hidden with Christ, or of our being one with Him, or partaking of His Body and Blood, seeming to describe in all these and similar phrases some near and intimate relation. But we fear to appropriate these expressions to ourselves, because we are afraid of being unreal and of using words which have no meaning to us, either because our lives are so inadequate to what is described by them, or because the modes of thought used in Scripture, as in other ancient writings, may have ceased to be familiar to us. They may require to be translated before they can be applied to practical use. And I think that we can imagine some one coming to Christ and asking Him about this difficulty, as the disciples seem to have been in the habit of doing,—'Lord, how wilt Thou take up Thine abode in us, and in what manner shall we be conscious of Thy presence?' and Christ answering, as He did to a similar question, 'Whoever will take up his cross and follow Me, I am one with him'; and 'Forasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto Me'; and 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' For the spirit of Christianity is not that we should maintain this or that opinion, or use this or that form of words, but that, maintaining any opinion and using any form of words, we should be like Him. And Christ Himself seems everywhere to put the inward in the place of the

outward, the wider in the place of the narrower, the principle that embraces all mankind in the place of that which is national and exclusive; and in this one word to sum up the salvation of man—that we should be like Him. And to be like Him is to live for others and not for ourselves, to be dead to the world and the opinion of the world, and to love the truth. Thus, after so many ages and in such an altered world, the image of Christ may still be present with us.

Lastly, we carry to the Communion many private thoughts and many personal and solemn recollections. There are sins of which we have been guilty which we are not bound to confess to others, but which we are bound to place distinctly before ourselves and God, lest our moral sense should become impaired by them, and our nature lowered and degraded. One of the uses of solemn occasions is that they lead us to place the requirements of God side by side with our own actions; they startle us out of sleep; they make us compare our own life with that of Christ, our lot with that of our poorer brethren, and they teach us to feel that for all our blessings and advantages we have to render an account to God. And, besides the remembrance of our sins, there are many other thoughts which we may fitly bring with us into the presence of God. There is the recollection of our past lives, with their strange tissue of good and evil, in which we recognize the working of His power.

There are the persons whom we love, and the thought of whom is the highest earthly motive which many of us have for deterring us from evil. There are duties which we owe to others of which we may especially think, passing each of them distinctly in affectionate remembrance before the mind. And there is the plan of life which we desire to consecrate to His service, the new profession on which we are about to enter, the work which we hope to complete if we are spared, not from any motive of vainglory, but that we may do something for the sake of truth, and add, if but a little, to the stock of human knowledge. There is the business that we have to carry on for the sake of others rather than of ourselves, the house that we have to set in order before we die.

And once more, there are the dead, of whom we know so little, and whom we would not have out of our minds because they are removed from our sight. We do not wish to indulge any fancies about them, or imagine that they can be affected by our prayers for them. But still it is natural to us sometimes to think of them; we would not have those loved ones altogether forgotten after many years have rolled away, or be like strangers among us if they could come back to earth. There is the fair child who was taken from us ten, twenty, thirty years ago, the brother who has left a blank which can never be replaced, the youth who gave such promise of distinction cut off before his prime, the mother whose love seemed never

to have an end. They do not need our poor regards, but it does us good to spend a few minutes in thinking of them. They seem to be so numerous as we get on in life, and to be separated by so wide an interval from us. What has become of them? Where are they? What are they doing? We only know that they are in the hands of God, and that we shall one day be with them.

XVIII

IMMORTALITY[1].

IT DOTH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

THERE are some parts of religion which we are unable to verify by experience, and which seem to be on the uttermost limits of human knowledge. The deepest thoughts in the soul of a man are often those which he can neither define nor express. And sometimes we put them away from us lest they should disturb the balance of our lives, or we speak of them in reserved and conventional formulas, or we describe them in figures of speech or texts of Scripture which convey no meaning to our minds, or we allow imagination to wander and attribute a sort of inspiration to every feeling and fancy which plays around them, as matters long settled, proved by a thousand arguments, and laid upon the shelf, but not to be taken down or reconsidered.

In this way some of the first truths of religion, and especially the two greatest of all, the nature of God

[1] Preached at Balliol, 1869.

and the faith in immortality, pass out of sight and are in process of being lost. Some present interest of controversy, some question of Church politics which is a thousand miles and a thousand years away from them, takes the place of them in our minds. The proportions of religious truth are inverted; the transient phase of opinion is all-absorbing for a time. But at the approach of death, or in any great crisis of our lives, we return to first principles; then we want to have our faith confirmed about one or two important matters. If we are to live again in another state of being, if those who are taken from us are still alive in some other place or manner, we must think about these things. Though 'we see through a glass darkly,' though we know in part only, we cannot help asking ourselves what the apostle meant by the words, 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be,' and what we mean by repeating them.

Teachers of religion have often spoken of the resurrection under imagery derived from external nature. The various transformations of the vegetable or animal world, the birth of creatures, the chrysalis that opens and spreads its wings in the sunlight, the seed that is not quickened except it die, the sudden burst of all nature into life in every recurring Spring, have often been used both as symbols and evidences of that greater change which, as we believe, will one day pass over us all. Regarded as figures of speech they have their use; and yet we must not press them

or argue from them, or we shall lay ourselves open to the objection that the sensible evidence of renewal of life which is present in the one case is wanting in the other, and that we do not see the difference between them. But, like other figures of speech, they clothe our thoughts; they teach us to realize what otherwise would be vague and abstract to us. Ideas of an invisible world must be rendered by earthly images; there is no tongue of angels in which they can be expressed. The wonders of nature may lead us to suspect that even in the visible world there is more than we know or can conceive. There are many hidden secrets there too, about the beginning or end of the world and of the human race; about the causes of life and death, which have not yet been, and perhaps never will be, unlocked. But this is not the foundation on which our hope of immortality reposes; and we must not be altogether surprised or shocked if some one points out that in this, as in so many other theological questions, what we mistook for argument was really an illustration.

There is another way in which mankind have been naturally led to think of another life—through the influence of their own circumstances—'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' The spirits and forms of the dead seem to hover around us and to be about our bed and about our path, sometimes for a shorter, sometimes for a longer period, after they have been taken from us. Their kindness, their loveliness,

their pleasant ways still encircle us; we seem as if we should never see the like of them again on earth. The staff of life, or the comfort of life, or the light of life has been taken from us, and we are left to finish the journey in cold and solitude. And we have heard of those whom the loss of a mother or a friend has won over to the belief in immortality. These are not merely Christian feelings, they are natural to man. The ancient Greek had the same aches and pains about his departed ones. The worship of ancestry is one of the oldest and most universal parts of religion; and many books have been written to prove that 'we shall see and know our friends in heaven,' and that those ties will be renewed in another world which have formed the best part of our lives in this. But, if we reflect, we shall see that it is a train of thought which we cannot trust ourselves to pursue; our sorrows will not allow us to be impartial about those whom we love. There is a better comfort and a deeper truth in the answer of Christ to the shrewd question of the Sadducees—'In the Resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven': for the dead are ever fading out of sight; for a few weeks or months, or perhaps years, they may be very near to us, and after a time we feel their loss in a less degree, not from any loss of constancy on our parts, but because this is the appointed order of God and the nature of our minds. Beyond the last generation, or the one before, we

hardly know them; their names are venerated on tombstones, and that is almost all. And yet it is a strange thought that they who are so little to us now, though bound to us by ties of blood, had affections and interests and sorrows and joys as strong and vivid as we now have. They are at a fixed point in the far distance from us, while we are floating further and further away from them down the stream of time. We cannot, even in thought, reconstruct the relationship which once subsisted. There are a few, perhaps, in that innumerable company who still detain our longing eyes; whose voice, whose look, whose character, remains with us to our life's end; and who, if after a long absence they could revisit the earth, like friends returning from India or some distant land, would find themselves not forgotten in the hurry of the world; and we should welcome them to the accustomed place which had always been vacant for them. But this is not the way in which we commonly regard the souls of the departed: we leave them in the hands of God, who is able to take care of them, who is as near to them as He is to us, who is their Father and our Father, and their God and our God.

Nor, again, should I be disposed to rest the belief in immortality on any past fact, once happening in the course of the world's history, for this reason: Some one may point out to me that all past events necessarily rest on testimony; he may show me discrepancies in the narrative of the event; he may ask whether we

refuse to apply to our narrative the same principles of evidence which are applied to another. Can I venture to answer him by appealing to authority, still less by denying to him the name of Christian? And I think that we have a strong and just feeling that the first truths of religion cannot be rocking to and fro with successive schools of criticism, and that whatever does rock to and fro in this way is not a first truth of religion. We cannot suppose that anything important in human life is really affected by the date or mode of composition of a book, except in so far as our mistaken opinion has made it so.

And the same persons may go on to ask, 'Why should we trust to the lower sort of arguments, against which historical criticism and physical science in their present stage seem to combine, when we have other and higher ones? Why should we depend on evidences which are external, and have no connexion with our moral nature, which cannot be the same to all persons and in all ages and countries (for the uneducated, and in the East I may say whole nations, cannot understand the nature of historical evidence), when we have a truer and deeper witness, and nearer home, in our own reason and conscience?

Leaving, then, such associations and figures of speech, as only accidentally connected with our faith in immortality, let us consider the subject anew; first, in reference to the nature of God; secondly, in relation to ourselves; thirdly, in relation to our fellow-men.

1. We cannot think of immortality and not at the same time think of a Supreme Being; without Him we are like children cast forth to swim upon an illimitable ocean. Our strongest reason for believing in another life is our conviction that He is, and that He is perfectly just and true and good and wise. This is not a discovery of our own, revealed to us by any peculiar kind of light, but a truth common to all men, which almost all religions in all ages have been striving after, and which Christ our Lord came to teach us more clearly; to which the human race seems to be tending, with greater difficulties indeed from the very extent of the conception, and yet on deeper grounds, as the thoughts of men widen with the process of the suns. It is a truth towards which the world is growing amid some appearances to the contrary, under many names and in many forms, by revelation, without revelation; through Scripture, through nature, as order begins to appear out of disorder, as the mass of mankind become more agreed about the essentials of religion, as religion begins to be more and more identified with morality and morality with religion, as all nations acknowledge more and more that they are of one brotherhood and kindred.

But, if we believe in a perfect God, we must believe that He wills all His creatures to participate in that perfection which He Himself is. He is the centre and we the outskirts of His kingdom, which He, like the

sun, is beginning to illuminate until the whole is light. The appearances of this world puzzle us, and sometimes lead us to ask what is the meaning of all this—not light but rather darkness visible—in which truth and error, good and evil, are at war with one another, or more often are inextricably intertwined. For we see good which never comes to anything, germs and seeds which never ripen; there appears to be such a waste, not only of vegetable and animal natures, but also of human and rational souls, upon the earth. One person is taken from us just as he is beginning to accomplish some great end, another whose life is so necessary to his family, to the State, or to the Church. There is so little again of any perfect growth of character among us which is attained in the short period of three score years and ten: the experience of life is hardly gained when life comes to an end. The physical laws of the world seem to proceed in regular order, but the moral laws are only beginning to be developed; the whole course of the world appears to be a sort of education, leading up to that state of life and knowledge, still very imperfect, in which we find ourselves. But then can we really suppose that all these countless myriads who have gone down into silence were created only for our sake, that we might make a few steps onward in the march of human progress? That would be like supposing that the fixed stars were only created to give light to one of the satellites of the sun. Or do

we imagine that we ourselves are mere stepping-stones on which future ages are to be built up?

The answer is that we know in part, and that the purposes of God towards mankind are as yet only half revealed, or, in the Apostle's language, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' We see the beginning, but not the end; neither can we form any adequate conception of the manner in which the divine nature works. Nothing in this world would lead us to suppose that perfection would be a sudden or random result; and, if proceeding only in due course and order, then degrees of perfection necessarily imply also degrees of imperfection. But, if God is perfect, all these beginnings of things which we see around us are one day to be completed. As our Saviour says, 'The hairs of your head are all numbered,' and, 'Not one sparrow falleth to the ground but your heavenly Father knoweth it.' We may repeat after Him, 'Not one human soul in the most remote ages, in the most distant countries, which He has not still in His hands.' Not only the great men of past ages, who are sometimes said metaphorically to have an immortality of fame, still live; but the meanest, the weakest, the poorest, and those who were of no account in this world, are still alive, fulfilling the work which He called them into existence to perform. This is involved in any conception of God which represents Him as a moral being at all; and to deny any part of this is to deny His moral

nature. For God has not allowed the sense of justice to grow up in us, or prescribed this to be the rule of our lives, that He should Himself violate His own law when dealing with His creatures on a larger scale; that justice should be administered in courts of law in the world, and consecrated in the opinions of men, and in the great conclusion of all things be finally lost sight of.

And, as our belief in another life is chiefly founded on our belief in the existence of God, so our conception of the nature of that state is derived from our conception of the divine. The Apostle says that 'when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' This is that necessary use of metaphors of which I was speaking; for we know that in outward form we cannot be like Him, who has no form. But to be like Him is to be just as He is just, to be true as He is true, to be loving as He is, to know His will perfectly and to have no other will; to become a sort of universal nature, if I may use such a phrase, which has no touch of interest or selfishness, but in everything regards others equally with self. This is the highest form in which we can conceive of another life, and is also the pattern or ideal we place before ourselves in this—not to be always thinking about God, for that may overstrain human faculties, and may sometimes lend a fire to the evil that is in us as well as to the good; but to be seeking to frame our lives in His image, that we may bear in some degree

on earth the likeness which we hope to bear in heaven.

This or something like this is the idea which we are able to form of another state of being in which we shall do the will of God perfectly, and of which we see a trace or reflection in the lives of very few individuals in this world. We know very well, as I was saying at first, that these thoughts when put into words seem poor and meagre; they do not fill our minds with pleasant pictures, or strew the garden of the soul with flowers of paradise. The only way in which we can realize them is to live in them, to waken in ourselves the sense of a divine power which is the embodiment of justice and truth and love, and to think of this power as equally the Lord of this life and another. For as another life is inseparably connected with God, it is inseparably connected with this life also; and He is the source from which they are both derived, and the centre in which they meet.

And, as we speak or think of a perfect state of life in which we shall be one with God and God with us, so, guided by the same consideration of the divine attributes, we may also think of imperfect states of being—states of discipline and education, of struggle and suffering, in which we are gradually prepared to receive a higher nature; for most of us cannot think ourselves worthy of eternal happiness, and as little, perhaps, deserving of eternal misery. We see all sorts of degrees of good and evil among men, and an

infinite variety of circumstances and opportunities; and we cannot suppose that, irrespective of differences of circumstances or degrees of good and evil, another world is divided by a hard and fast line into two classes only. Natural justice seems to revolt at this; we cannot attribute to God a rule of judgement which would seem very imperfect and mistaken and ludicrous in man. We know indeed that many vain speculations have been entertained respecting an intermediate state, which have fascinated men's minds, and drawn them off from the simpler and greater truths of religion; and that doctrines of purgatory and masses for the dead have corrupted the Gospel of Christ, and been dangerous to morality and society. But what is not idle conjecture, nor yet dangerous to morality and society, but rather the foundation of them, is the belief that God will deal with us as we are, not as we appear to ourselves or others, by the rule of justice, estimating our individual characters and lives according to their circumstances, not roughly generalizing as men might do; and that this justice will still be like the justice of a father to his children, subject to that love whereby He is wishing to draw all things to Himself.

I have been speaking of a future state as immediately connected with our belief in God. This must always be the chief ground of our confidence in an invisible world. If we cannot believe that all live unto Him in this world, we shall have a doubtful and precarious hope of an existence beyond the grave.

2. There are two other aspects of the subject, however, which I was going to mention—our own experience, and the contemplation of our fellow-men.

The best things in life speak to us of immortality. The best thoughts of our hearts, the best persons whom we have known, especially among the poor, the struggle against evil, the aspiration after good, the disinterested desire to live above the world, to devote ourselves to others, to know more about the truth and about God, to be like Christ—these are a sort of forecast of a life to come. It is hardly possible to see how these things could continue if there were no hopes of another state of being. Human nature would lose faith so entirely, and would settle down, if we die as the brutes, into living like the brutes. I do not mean that we should feel ourselves cheated of a reward, for the more a man is absorbed in the performance of duty the more the idea of reward takes the form of a more perfect performance of his duty. But we should feel ourselves so deeply discouraged, so broken-hearted, if there were no truth better than the truth of this world, no justice higher than this justice, no love purer than the love of this world, no higher state of being to which we might look forward, if all is illusion and we are really the playthings of nature and chance. If we were once convinced of this, then we should feel that we had better not live. For our highest thoughts would only seem to mock us with the bitterness of death. A great poet, who was also a philosopher, has

argued, not from the Christian's point of view but from the nature of things, 'that he who has an adequate conception of the world as a whole must have a conception of God.' In a like strain of reflection it might be said 'that he who has an adequate conception of the depth of human nature must have also a faith in immortality.' For the greatest thoughts of men carry them beyond this world; if confined to earth they are spoiled and stunted. The willingness to die for others, the indifference to the opinion of mankind, the love of truth for its own sake, the perfect disinterestedness—these are some of the qualities, though seen in a very few, which awaken and confirm our sense of the immortality of man.

But there is another voice within us which tells us not to lose faith in the goodness of God or in the order of the world, for that these are the things of which we are most certain, and of which we have the evidence in ourselves. 'If a man have the will to do the works he shall know of the doctrine.' The better a man becomes, the less he has of doubt and fear, the more he is at peace with himself, the more he is convinced of the final victory of good in the world, the more willing he is, when his time comes, to surrender himself into the hands of God. There may be a reason for scepticism when a man is leading a careless, sensual, self-delusive life; then the higher sort of things become obliterated in his mind, and he is willing to take his chance. But when a man is day by day and

year by year trying to do his duty better, to know more of the truth, to carry on the work of God in the world more perfectly, in the conquest of evil, in the aspiration after good, just in proportion as he is free from every human and earthly influence he will feel more assured that he is not deceiving himself, and that God is not deceiving him.

3. But, once more, there is another point of view from which we realize a future life, the contemplation of our fellow-men. It is a rational and right feeling that we and such as we, who are met here together this day, have many undeserved blessings—good food and clothing, good health (at least most of us have), a good position in life, the greatest of God's gifts, education; a bright prospect of happiness and usefulness, if we take the means to them. It is natural that we should think of these things, sometimes asking ourselves that question of Scripture, 'Who made thee to differ from another?' But what of others who have not these, who are friendless and poor and have passed their lives in misery; and some who have had no opportunity of extricating themselves from vice and degradation, to whom it is a mere mockery to say that this life is a state of probation, for they have been predestined from their birth to pauperism and crime? Would not this world be the most unjust of worlds if all is over with them? Go into the wards of a hospital in which men and women are lying ill of incurable diseases, or into the cells of a prison, or into a lunatic

asylum, or only into the meaner suburbs of some great city, and see there the worn, emaciated, distracted faces of those with whom the world has gone wrong, to whom from the beginning it has been a mistake, who have only enough reason to raise them a little above or degrade them a little below the animals. Is there no better thing reserved for them? Is there no further lesson or meaning in all this suffering? To one of us it may perhaps be said, 'Son, thou in thy lifetime hadst thy good things.' But what of Lazarus laid at the gate full of sores? Wherever we go, these sights of human sin and suffering, if we read them aright, lead us to the reflection that this world is not all.

And there is another kind of witness, which is borne by the actions and wrongs of good and great men, having this hope and faith in them, who have devoted their whole lives to the good of their fellow-creatures. When they have died for them, when they have renounced all that men usually most desire, fame, wealth, earthly happiness, for the interests of knowledge, for the improvement of mankind, for the love of Christ, has all that been a mistake? and have the best of men been after all the most mistaken? There have been some in past times who have perished at the stake; there have been those in our own day who have gone down in a ship to save the lives of others. Did the waves close over them for ever? If so, (I hardly like to ask the question) is not the life of Christ,

instead of being the hope and support of the world, the greatest illusion of all? and those words which He spoke, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' a deception? and were not the saints who followed Him and have partaken of His sufferings only grasping at a shadow?

Like the Apostle, we feel that God has not been deceiving us in all this, and that Christ was not uttering unmeaning words. And, although He has not allowed us to enter within the veil, yet He has given witnesses and assurances enough to guide our footsteps in this world, and to support us in the valley of death. We do not sorrow, when we commit our beloved ones to the tomb, as though we were without hope, knowing that we are giving them back to God from whom they came, and looking forward to the time of our own departure. We say from our inmost souls, 'Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his.' And, when that hour comes, though, considering the imperfect nature of our lives and the darkness that partly encircles us, we may not have such rapturous anticipations as have been ascribed to some of the saints of old, we still pray that we may be able to say in faith, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'

ADDITIONAL SERMON

ON FRIENDSHIP

FRIENDSHIP.

IRON SHARPENETH IRON; SO A MAN SHARPENETH THE COUNTENANCE OF HIS FRIEND.

PROVERBS xxvii. 17.

THERE are many things said about friendship in Scripture, and some touching examples of the fidelity of friends. 'A friend loveth at all times,' and 'There is one that sticketh closer than a brother,' are two sayings about friendship which occur in the Book of Proverbs. Another is 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend,' which means that his reproofs are true and upright, and proceed from the love of his soul; they are the contrary of those 'precious balms' which are said to break the head. 'He that repeateth a matter separateth friends,' is a maxim of which the proof lies within the experience of all of us. 'Sweet language will multiply friends' may be compared with the more familiar proverb, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath.' 'He that hath friends must show himself friendly,' that is, he must be kindly and sociable, he must talk to his friends and show them sympathy, or the springs of friendship will soon be dried up in them. 'A faithful friend is the medicine of life'; he is the medicine, and also the physician, who heals the wounds

which unkindness or misfortune have made in our lives, who ministers to us and restores us to ourselves.

These are quaint utterances of Eastern wisdom more than two thousand years old; and yet they have a living voice, and speak to modern society as much as to the Israelites of old. Whoever was the author of them had a profound insight into the nature of man. And there are not only sayings of this kind, but there are also striking and typical examples in Scripture of personal attachments, such as that noble one of David and Jonathan, the two men who seemed destined almost necessarily and by the nature of the case to be enemies of one another; yet at first sight, as we are told, Jonathan 'loved him as his own soul.' No cloud of envy intercepted his admiration of the great warrior, the sweet singer of Israel, who hereafter was to supersede him in the kingdom. Many persons can regard with equanimity the rise of a rival who is still a little inferior to them. But it is only a generous mind which can feel admiration of a superior, equal in years or younger, without any alloy of jealousy. Jonathan was persuaded that he was not to succeed to the throne of his father, but he was content to take the second place—'Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee.' And, of all the persons at Saul's court, the man whom he was destined to supplant was the only one whom David trusted. There is no more touching scene than the last farewell of

these two, when 'David arose out of his hiding-place and bowed himself three times, and they kissed one another, and wept with one another until David exceeded.'

Remember again the deep and earnest affection of the two women, Ruth and Naomi, though of different country and origin: 'Whither thou goest I will go, where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so unto me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.'

Turning to the New Testament, we find that St. Paul had his younger friend Timotheus, who, 'like a son with a father, laboured with him in the Gospel'; and that our Saviour Christ, though His thoughts were not as our thoughts, was the friend of Lazarus, and of Martha and Mary, in whose home He sat at meat; that He 'called His disciples friends,' adding the reason 'because He had told them all that He had heard of the Father,' just as men tell their whole mind to their friends; and that, although He loved all His disciples, yet among them there was one who is called the 'beloved disciple,' who also 'leaned on His breast at supper.'

If, passing from Scripture, we proceed to classical literature, we see that friendship has a great part both in the government of States and in the lives of individuals; it is an aspect of politics, and of human

nature, and of all virtue. Partly owing to the different character of domestic life, the tie of friendship seems to have exercised a greater influence among the Greeks and Romans than among ourselves. And, although these attachments may sometimes have degenerated into licentiousness (for the best things in human nature are not far removed from the worst), we cannot doubt that much of what was noble in that old life is also due to them. Such an ideal the Greek had before him in the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus, of Pylades and Orestes, who, as the ancient story told, were ready to die for one another. The school of Socrates was quite as much a circle of friends as a band of disciples. And in Roman times we hear of noble friendships, such as that of Scipio and Laelius, which Cicero has described to us, or his own friendship with Atticus, to whom, though a very different character from himself, he communicated his inmost thoughts, his weaknesses, his vanities, feeling sure that he would meet with a response.

Our great dramatist again has provided us with several types of friendship. Most of us will remember the parting of the two friends, when the one who had so much need to feel anxiety about his own concerns can think only of his love for his friend:

> 'And even then, his eye being big with tears,
> Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
> And, with affection wondrous sensible,
> He wrung Bassanio's hand, and so they parted.'

Or the well-known passage in Hamlet, beginning:

> 'Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
> As e'er my conversation coped withal.'

And

> 'Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
> And could of men distinguish, her election
> Hath sealed thee for herself.'

Or the adieu of the prating old man of the world, whose maxims seem to be so far above his character:

> 'The friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
> But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatched unfledged comrade.'

Or again:

> 'This above all: to thine own self be true;
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.'

In another great play, 'Julius Caesar,' there is a description of a quarrel between two friends, both of whom are cast in a larger mould than ordinary men, the one so passionate and restless, the other so just and immovable, between whom angry words pass until their deeper love is called forth by the overpowering sorrow of one of them. These are types or models, which I venture to cite by way of preface, because they illustrate the subject of which I am about to speak this morning.

In youth, when life is first opening upon us, we easily form friendships; then, to be with our equals at school or college, in any new beginning of life,

when we become our own masters, is delightful to us: and we single out one or two, that we may share our pleasures with them, and join in their serious occupations. A young man, if poor in worldly goods, may reasonably hope to be rich in friends. He himself will be more disposed to form friendships than in later years. If he be kindly and affectionate and good-natured, if he cultivate the habit of conversing with others, not wrapping himself in a moody shyness, he will find that friends soon begin to gather around him. There will be no other opportunity in after life like that which he has here. For here alone the circle from which he may choose is practically unlimited. Here also men are brought together from different places and conditions, and meet one another on the common level of education and college life. Like draws towards like, and youth rejoices in youth. 'Let him not,' to repeat once more the words of the poet,

> 'Dull his palm with entertainment
> Of each new-hatched unfledged comrade';

but let him be ambitious of knowing those who are a little above him, not in worldly position, but in ability, in force of character, in goodness.

The memory of that first opening of life will be imprinted on our minds as long as we have the recollection of anything; far more (and indeed it is really more important) than any similar period of life which is to follow. The pleasant days of youth

will be cherished by us in imagination thirty or forty years hence; the remembrance of early friends will be brought back to us in many a conversation with old acquaintances and contemporaries, or with the chance stranger whom we meet perhaps in a foreign land. For we too—I mean the younger portion of us—if we live, will have feelings about the past of which we know nothing as yet; and the elder among us may go back to old scenes, which sometimes haunt us, of loving friends now departed, of a world which seems to have died out to us and yet is very easily called up and near to us in thought.

Remembering these things as they affect us all, I propose to speak to you to-day of friendship, its nature and value, its dangers and disappointments, its joys and sorrows; and then I shall say a few words of Christian friendship, which, in uniting us to a friend, at the same time unites us to Christ and God.

In speaking of the opportunity of forming friendships which youth possesses, I do not mean to say that we can acquire friends exactly as we please. Friendships are not made, but grow out of similarity of tastes, out of mutual respect, from the discovery of some hitherto unsuspected vein of sympathy: they depend also on our powers of inspiring friendship in others. Two men meet and talk together, and at once they seem to understand one another: they may differ in character, but they have also something in common which gives them an extraordinary regard

for one another. They have found, as if by accident and mere juxtaposition, the very person in all the world who is most congenial to them, at any rate for a time. Yet neither is the choice of friends altogether independent of ourselves. A man may properly seek for them, he may have an honourable desire to know those who are his superiors in moral and intellectual qualities; or he may allow himself to drop into the society of persons beneath him, perhaps because he is more at home with them and is proud and shy with his superiors. And so he gets good, or harm, out of the companionship of those whom he loves. Such as they are he will be in some degree; he will take from them his manners and style of conversation; he will be reflected in them and they in him. We do not want to be judges of our fellow men (for 'who made thee to differ from another?'). But neither can we leave entirely to chance one of the greatest influences of human life.

And, first, let me speak of the character of true friendship. It should be simple, manly, unreserved, not weak, or fond, or extravagant, nor yet exacting more than human nature can fairly give (for there are other ties which bind men to one another besides friendship); nor again intrusive into the secrets of another's soul, or curious about his circumstances; rejoicing in the presence of a friend, and not forgetting him in his absence. It should be easy too and cheerful, careful of little things, but having also a sort of

dignity which is based on mutual respect. Perhaps the greatest element of friendship is faithfulness. To know that there is some one who will be always the same to us, who has a deep and abiding affection for us, to whom in time of trial we may turn for advice or help, adds greatly to the security and happiness of life. Two going together have not only a twofold but a fourfold strength. They learn from each other, they form the character of one another, they bear one another's burdens; they make up for each other's defects, they double each other's pleasures. Few persons are so constituted that they can live wholly without kindness. It is this want in our nature that friendship supplies. When the heart is in bitterness or disappointment; when we have made a mistake, or are going to make a mistake; when we are over-sensitive to the opinion of the world; we cannot value too highly the counsel and sympathy of another. At such times the appearance of a friend is like the return of sunshine, giving light and warmth to the dull and chill landscape.

The ancients spoke of three kinds of friendship: one for the sake of the useful, another for the sake of the pleasant, a third for the sake of the good and noble. The first is a contradiction in terms, for no man can be the friend of another with a view to his own interests; this is a partnership and not a friendship. A sensitive and honourable mind will rather fear lest some indirect advantage may impair the

disinterestedness of true friendship. Yet there are services, even pecuniary, rendered by friends to one another which are 'twice blessed.' Of the pleasures of friendship I need hardly speak to you. For every one in youth knows the delight of having a friend. Who has not felt his heart beat quicker, standing at the door of the house at which he expects to meet him after a long absence? How many things have we to say to him; how much to hear from him, protracting into the night our conversation with him, which seems as if it would never end. Even the common incident of paying a visit to an old friend is the source of a great deal of pleasure to us. So naturally formed are we for friendship; so great are the blessings which flow from it.

But let us now consider further, whether, in ancient phraseology, there may not be a friendship for the sake of the noble and the good. Men are dependent beings, and we cannot fail to see how much more, when acting together, they may do for the elevation of one another's characters, and for the improvement of mankind. Thus friendship becomes fellow service in daily work; perhaps in the management of a school, or a college, or an office; and, when there is no such connexion, at any rate a sympathy about all the higher objects in which the friends take an interest. They seek to impart to one another the best which they have; they inspire one another with high and noble thoughts; they may sometimes rejoice

together over the portion of their work which has been accomplished, and take counsel about that which remains to be done; or perhaps congratulate one another on some public event in which they took a more distinct part. They desire, if I may use a homely expression, to keep one another up to the mark; not to allow indolence or eccentricity or weakness to overgrow and spoil their lives. And sometimes, though with care and reserve, they will speak to one another of faults and mistakes. For we cannot see ourselves exactly as others see us, nor can we hear what others say of us. And, although the candid friend has a bad name, yet there are crises of life in which the words of friendship may be golden, and may save us from protracted misery or one long mistake. A faithful friend cannot stand by and see another on the high road to ruin without expostulating. Seldom, though this is a minor matter, will words dictated by true affection be found to give our friend pain or offence; the love which we bear to another is the measure of what we can say to him.

But this is an ideal of friendship which is rarely attained in this world. Like the other goods of life, friendship is commonly mixed and imperfect, and liable to be interrupted by the changing circumstances or tempers of men. Few, comparatively, have the same friends in youth and age, unless bound to them by the tie of relationship. Some of our youthful friendships are too violent to last; they have in them

some element of weakness or sentimentalism; the feeling passes away, and we become ashamed of them and desire that they should be no more remembered. Sometimes the characters of men develop differently; or their interests become opposed; or their opinions, as Cicero remarks about politics, or, as we should more often say, about the Church and religion, diverge widely; or at some critical time a friend has failed to stand by us, and then our love to him grows cold, and the point of view from which we regard his whole character is altered. Friendships should not be lightly broken; but, when they are broken, they cannot be easily resumed. Only let us remember that there are duties which we owe to the 'extinct' friend, as I may term him, who perhaps on some fanciful ground has parted company with us. We should never speak against him, or make use of our knowledge about him. Let us remember his former kindness, and bury his coldness or disloyalty; we may have even learned from him lessons which he has forgotten himself; for the memory of a friendship is like the memory of the dead, not lightly to be spoken of or aspersed. Yet the breaking up of a friendship and the loss of a friend is more often due to our own fault than to circumstances. We have been negligent of him; we don't see much of him, as people say; we have not 'kept the friendship in repair'; and thus insensibly alienation arises. Or he may have written or said something about us which

is irritating, and we may make it an excuse for casting him off. But many things may be said against most of us which are perfectly just, and from which we may learn something about ourselves and about the truth. We should at least allow criticism, whether we are enlightened by it or not, to flow off from us, and not to disturb our minds or our relations to others. Nor can any man be talked down, any more than he can be written down, except by himself. A passing word should not be suffered to interrupt the friendship of years. 'Admonish a friend; it may be that he hath not done it: and if he have done it that he do it no more. Admonish thy friend; it may be that he hath not said it: and if he have that he speak it not again.' Persons often give unintentional offence because they are uneasy with themselves. It is a curious observation, that the most sensitive natures are also the most liable to pain the feelings of others. Nor is the reason far to seek; for they are so engrossed with their own sensibilities that they have no room for the thought of others. In friendships, as in families, a great deal of misery has been caused from the misunderstanding of this. Those who are yearning for sympathy, for kindness, for forgiveness, nevertheless wear a cold or haughty exterior. Among the better sort of men and women, half the evils of life seem to rise from a want of imagination. They are too literal and positive; they do not put themselves in another's situation;

they do not understand one another's trials. Many of us must have known families in which for years, sometimes almost for generations, there has been no peace or comfort; and we wonder how such good people should have lived in such an unchristian manner, and have done so little for the happiness of one another. Is not the cause of this mainly inattention to one another's characters? Though we may with a certain justice attack these foibles and infirmities of human nature, yet we are all liable to them to some extent, and therefore should all seek to minister to them. There is a great deal of magnanimity required, and a long experience, before we can fully realize or overcome the petty jealousies and irritations of life. Tried by the ethical standard of virtue and vice, these bitternesses may seem trifles. But any one who wishes to raise the character of society either here or elsewhere, who would strengthen the bonds of the family, or make friendship permanent or lasting, must acknowledge that he can effect these objects in any degree only by an entire freedom from personality in himself, and a loving consideration of the feelings of others.

Lastly, I proposed to speak to you of Christian friendship, which is another aspect of the ideal friendship, though in some respects different. For the spirit of a man's life may be more or less consciously Christian. That which others regard as the service of man, he may recognize to be the service of

God; that which others do out of compassion for their fellow creatures he may do also for the love of Christ. Feeling that God has made him what he is, he may seek to carry on his work in the world as a fellow worker with God: remembering that Christ died for us, he may be ready to lay down his life for other men. And so of friendship; that also may be more immediately based on religious motives and may flow out of a religious principle. 'They walked together in the house of God as friends,' that is, if I may venture to paraphrase the words, 'They served God together in doing good to His creatures': even their earthly love to one another was sanctified by the thought that they were in His presence. And sometimes they poured forth their aspirations in prayer, or at the Communion, that their friendship might be worthy of servants of Christ; and that they might find the meeting-point of their lives in Him. For human friendships constantly require to be purified, and raised from earth to heaven. And yet they should not lose themselves in spiritual emotion, or in unreal words. Better that friendship should have no element of religion than that it should degenerate into cant and insincerity. But there may be some amongst us who, like St. Paul, are capable of feeling a natural interest in the spiritual welfare of others; or, if you like the expression better, in the improvement of their characters; that they may become more such as God intended them to be in this world. And all

of us may sometimes think of ourselves and our friends as living to God, and of human love as bearing the image of the divine.

But in some respects Christian friendship is not merely the religious aspect of the ideal of the ancients: it is also different. For it is not merely the friendship of equals, but of unequals; the love of the weak and of those who can make no return, like the love of God towards the unthankful and the evil. Perhaps for this reason it is less personal and individual, and more diffused towards all men. It is not a friendship of one or two, but of many. Again, it proceeds from a different rule—'Love your enemies.' It is founded upon that charity which 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' Such a friendship we may be hardly able to reconcile with our own character, or with common prudence. Yet nothing short of this is the Christian ideal which is set before us in the Gospel. And here and there may be found a person who has been inspired to carry it out in practice. I will tell you an anecdote which has lately come within my own knowledge. Two friends had been warmly attached to one another for many years, when one of them began to lose his reason. The malady, as is not uncommonly the case in these singular visitations, showed itself in extreme hatred and abuse of his former friend. The other took him into his family, and succeeded in restoring him to the world, after a few

months, completely cured. Is not this something like what the Scripture calls 'bearing the image of Christ'?

Lastly, some among us have known what it is to lose a friend. There are many reflections suggested to our minds by such a recollection. Death is a great teacher; the death of others, as well as the thought of our own, teaches us many things which we have imperfectly realized in life. Who that has lost a friend would not wish to have done more for him now that he is taken from us? How little should we have regarded any cause of offence which he had given us, if we had known that he was so soon to leave us! We recall the scenes in which we were accustomed to meet him; we remember the books which he loved; we treasure up the words which we shall hear no more. And where is he? Most of us have in our mind's eye some one no longer living, about whom we feel a peculiar interest. It may be an elder friend, who first drew us out, and taught us to have confidence in ourselves; or a youth of our own age who set us an example of a higher kind of life; or some sweet face may be recalled to us upon which parents and loving friends were accustomed to gaze 'as upon the face of an angel'; of one whose gentle ways we knew, and who still seems to linger among us. Or we may be reminded of the venerable presence of some aged man, with whom we used to sit and talk of times past, whose kindness and charitable judgement of his

fellow men seemed ever to increase with increasing years; of whom, also, it might be said, 'When the eye saw him it blessed him, and when the ear heard him it gave witness to him'; or some distinguished person whom we had known from very ancient days, who 'clung to us like a brother' when he became eminent as when we were youths together, with whom we had an unclouded friendship; or, if at times, like all human things, a little clouded, yet that makes no difference; we only wish that we had understood him better or been able to do more for him. Where is he, or she? and shall we ever see them and speak to them again? We cannot tell. They are withdrawn from our sight, and the language of this world is no longer applicable to them. But the memory of them may still consecrate and elevate our lives. The thoughts of a departed friend or child, instead of sinking us in sorrow, may be a guiding light to us; like the thoughts of Christ to the first disciples, bringing many things to our remembrance of which we were ignorant. And if we have hope in God for ourselves, we have hope also for them; we believe that they rest in Him, and that no evil shall touch them.

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